POEMS

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

DRAMA'S

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

ALSO

POEMS

BY

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

POEMS BY ROBERT BROWNINC

INCLUDING "DRAMATIC ROMANCES" & LYRICS," "PAULINE," "SORDELLO," "MEN AND WOMEN," ETC.



LONDON: GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LIMITED BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL, E.C. MDCCCCIII

CONTENTS

-0-

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics:—			PAGE
Cavalier Tunes :—			
1. Marching Along			 11
II. GIVE A ROUSE			 12
III. BOOT AND SADDLE .			 12
My Last Duchess			 13
COUNT GISMOND			 15
Incident of the French Camp			 18
Soliloguy of the Spanish Cloiste	R		 20
In a Gondola			 22
Artemis Prologuizes			 28
Waring			 30
RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI			 37
Cristina			 38
I. Madhouse Cell		ı	 40
II. Madhouse Cell	•	,	 41
THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-	Kadr		 43
THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN .			 44

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics:—			PAGE
"How they brought the Good	NEWS	FROM	
GHENT TO AIX"	•		51
PICTOR IGNOTUS		• .	53
THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND	•		55
THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY	•		58
THE LOST LEADER			65
THE LOST MISTRESS			66
Home-Thoughts, from Abroad .			67
Home-Thoughts, from the Sea .	•		67
THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT	ST. Pi	RAXED'S	
Снивсн			68
GARDEN-FANCIES:—			
I. THE FLOWER'S NAME			71
II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS			72
THE LABORATORY	•		74
THE CONFESSIONAL	v.	•	76
THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS	•		79
EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES			98
Song		•	99
THE BOY AND THE ANGEL			99
MEETING AT NIGHT			102
PARTING AT MORNING			102
SAUL			102
Time's Revenges			107
THE GLOVE			108
CLARET AND TOKAY		•	118
Pauline			115
CHRISTMAS EVE AND EASTER DAY			141

CON	TENT	s.					V11
Sordello							PAGI 199
Men and Women:	·	·	•	•	•	•	
Love among the Ruins							338
						Ċ	336
EVELYN HOPE				•	•	·	340
UP AT A VILLA—DOWN I				•	•	•	342
				•	•	•	345
FRA LIPPO LIPPI .				•	•	•	346
•		•	•	•	•	•	
A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S		•	•	•	•	•	355
By the Fire-side .		•	•	•	•	•	357
ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSE		•	•	•	•	•	366
AN EPISTLE	•	•	•	•	•	٠	371
Mesmerism	•		•	•	٠	٠	378
A SERENADE AT THE VIL	LA	•					383
My Star	•		•	,	•		385
Instans Tyrannus .	•						385
A PRETTY WOMAN .							388
"CHILDE ROLAND TO THE	DAR	к То	WER	Самі	E ',		391
RESPECTABILITY				•			398
A LIGHT WOMAN .							399
THE STATUE AND THE BU	JST				•		401
Love in a Life .							407
LIFE IN A LOVE							408
How it Strikes a Conte	MPOR	ARY					409
THE LAST RIDE TOGETHE	R						411
THE PATRIOT							415
MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE							416
RIGHOD REATIGNAM'S APOT				-		•	421

•	GONTON TO STATE OF ST
V111	CONTENTS
4 7 7 7	

	•							PAGE
ME	N AND WOMEN:-							
	MEMORABILIA	•	•		•	,		443
	Andrea del Sarto .	•	•					444
	Before		•					450
	After	•			•			451
	IN THREE DAYS .				٠			452
	IN A YEAR							453
	OLD PICTURES IN FLORES	ICE						456
	In a Balcony							464
	SAUL							492
	"DE GUSTIBUS ——"							504
	Women and Roses .							505
	Protus							507
	HOLY CROSS DAY .							508
	THE GUARDIAN ANGEL							513
	CLEON							515
	THE TWINS							522
	POPULARITY							524
	THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY		•					526
	Two in the Campagna			٠				529
	A Grammarian's Funera	L						531
	ONE WAY OF LOVE .							535
	Another Way of Love							536
						·		537
	Misconceptions	•	•			•		538
	ONE WORD MORE .	•	•	•	•	•	•	539
	ONE WORD MOKE .	•		•	•	•	•	บอช

Enscribed

то

JOHN KENYON, ESQ.,

IN THE HOPE THAT A RECOLLECTION OF HIS OWN SUCCESSFUL

"RHYMED PLEA FOR TOLERANCE"

MAY INDUCE HIM TO ADMIT GOOD-NATUREDLY THIS HUMBLER PROSE ONE OF

HIS VERY GRATEFUL AND AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

R. B.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES AND LYRICS.

CAVALIER TUNES.*

L-MARCHING ALONG.

ſ.

Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King, Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing: And, pressing a troop unable to stoop And see the rogues flourish and honest folks droop, Marched them along, fifty-score strong, Great-hearted gentlemen singing this song.

TT.

God for King Charles. Pym and such carles To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles! Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup, Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup Till you 're (Chorus) marching along fifty-score strong Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

m.

Hampden to Hell, and his obsequies' knell Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well! England, good cheer! Rupert is near! Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

> (Cho.) Marching along, fifty-score strong, Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?

^{*} Such Poems as the following come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of "Dramatic Pieces"; being, though for the most part Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine.

IV.

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles! Hold by the right, you double your might; So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

(Cho.) March we along, fifty-score strong, Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

II.—GIVE A ROUSE.

I.

KING CHARLES, and who'll do him right now? King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now? Give a rouse; here's, in Hell's despite now, King Charles!

II.

Who gave me the goods that went since? Who raised me the house that sank once? Who helped me to gold 1 spent since? Who found me in wine you drank once?

(Cho.) King Charles, and who'll do him right now!
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now!
Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,
King Charles!

III.

To whom used my boy George quaff else, By the old fool's side that begot him? For whom did he cheer and laugh else, While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

(Cho.) King Charles, and who'll do him right now?

King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?

Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,

King Charles!

III.-BOOT AND SADDLE.

Ŧ.

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away! Rescue my Castle, before the hot day Brightens the blue from its silvery grey,

(Cho.) "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

IT.

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say; Many's the friend there, will listen and pray "God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay,

(Cho.) "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

IX.

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay, Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads array: Who laughs, Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

(Cho.) "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

VI.

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay, Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay! "I've better counsellors; what counsel they?

(Cho.) "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

MY LAST DUCHESS.

FERRARA.

That 's my last Duchess painted on the wall, Looking as if she were alive; I call That piece of wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands Worked busily a day, and there she stands. Will't please you sit and look at her? I said "Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read Strangers like you that pictured countenance, The depth and passion of its earnest glance, But to myself they turned (since none puts by The curtain I have drawn from you, but I) And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst, How such a glance came there; so, not the first Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not Her husband's presence only, called that spot Of joy into the Duchess' cheek; perhaps Fra Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps "Over my Lady's wrist too much," or "Paint "Must never hope to reproduce the faint

" Half-flush that dies along her throat: " such stuff Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough For calling up that spot of joy. She had A heart . . how shall I say? . . too soon made glad, Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er She looked on, and her looks went everywhere. Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast, The dropping of the daylight in the West, The bough of cherries some officious fool Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule She rode with round the terrace—all and each Would draw from her alike the approving speech, Or blush, at least. She thanked men, -good; but thanked Somehow . . I know not how . . as if she ranked My gift of a nine hundred years old name With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame This sort of trifling? Even had you skill In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will Quite clear to such an one, and say "Just this "Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss, "Or there exceed the mark "-and if she let Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse. -E'en then would be some stooping, and I chuse Never to stoop. Oh, Sir, she smiled, no doubt. Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet The company below, then. I repeat, The Count your Master's known munificence Is ample warrant that no just pretence Of mine for dowry will be disallowed: Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go Together down, Sir! Notice Neptune, tho,' Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity. Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me.

COUNT GISMOND.

AIX IN PROVENCE.

Τ.

CHRIST God, who savest men, save most
Of men Count Gismond who saved me!
Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,
Chose time and place and company
To suit it; when he struck at length
My honour 'twas with all his strength.

TT.

And doubtlessly ere he could draw
All points to one, he must have schemed!
That miscrable morning saw
Few half so happy as I seemed,
While being dressed in Queen's array
To give our Tourney prize away.

III.

I thought they loved me, did me grace
'To please themselves; 'twas all their deed;
God makes, or fair or foul, our face;
If showing mine so caused to bleed
My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped
A word, and straight the play had stopped.

IV.

They, too, so beauteous! Each a queen By virtue of her brow and breast; Not needing to be crowned, I mean, As I do. E'en when I was dressed, Had either of them spoke, instead Of glancing sideways with still head!

v.

But no: they let me laugh, and sing
My birthday song quite through, adjust
The last rose in my garland, fling
A last look on the mirror, trust
My arms to each an arm of theirs,
And so descend the castle-stairs—

VI.

And come out on the morning troop
Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,
And called me Queen, and made me stoop
Under the canopy—(a streak
That pierced it, of the outside sun,
Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun)—

VII.

And they could let me take my state
And foolish throne amid applause
Of all come there to celebrate
My Queen's day—Oh, I think the cause
Of much was, they forgot no crowd
Makes up for parents in their shroud!

VIII.

Howe'er that be, all eyes were bent
Upon me, when my cousins cast
Theirs down; 'twas time I should present
The victor's crown, but . . there, 'twill last
No long time . . . the old mist again
Blinds me as then it did. How vain!

IX.

See! Gismond's at the gate, in talk
With his two boys: I can proceed.
Well, at that moment, who should stalk
Forth boldly (to my face, indeed)
But Gauthier, and he thundered "Stay!"
And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say!"

x.

"Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet About her! Let her shun the chaste,

"Or lay herself before their feet!

"Shall she whose body I embraced "A night long, queen it in the day?

" For Honour's sake no crowns, I say!"

XI.

I? What I answered? As I live, I never fancied such a thing As answer possible to give.

What says the body when they spring Some monstrous torture-engine's whole Strength on it? No more says the soul.

XII.

Till out strode Gismond; then I knew
That I was saved. I never met
His face before, but, at first view,
I felt quite sure that God had set
Himself to Satan; who would spend
A minute's mistrust on the end?

XIII.

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat
Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth
With one back-handed blow that wrote
In blood men's verdict there. North, South,
East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,
And damned, and truth stood up instead.

XIV

This glads me most, that I enjoyed
The heart of the joy, with my content
In watching Gismond unalloyed
By any doubt of the event:
God took that on him—I was bid
Watch Gismond for my part: I did.

xv

Did I not watch him while he let
His armourer just brace his greaves,
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
The while! His foot . . my memory leaves
No least stamp out, nor how anon
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

XVI.

And e'en before the trumpet's sound
Was finished, prone lay the false Knight,
Prone as his lie, upon the ground:
Gismond flew at him, used no sleight
Of the sword, but open-breasted drove,
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

XVII,

Which done, he dragged him to my feet
And said "Here die, but end thy breath
"In full confession, lest thou fleet
"From my first, to God's second death!
"Say, hast thou lied?" And, "I have hed
"To God and her," he said, and died.

XVIII.

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked
—What safe my heart holds, tho' no word
Could I repeat now, if I tasked
My powers for ever, to a third
Dear even as you are. Pass the rest
Until I sank upon his breast.

XIX.

Over my head his arm he flung
Against the world; and scarce I felt
His sword, that dripped by me and swung,
A little shifted in its belt,—
For he began to say the while
How South our home lay many a mile.

vv

So 'mid the shouting multitude
We two walked forth to never more
Return. My cousins have pursued
Their life, untroubled as before
I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place
God lighten! May his soul find grace!

XXI.

Our elder boy has got the clear
Great brow; tho' when his brother's black
Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond here?
And have you brought my tercel back?
I just was telling Adela
How many birds it struck since May.

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

I.

You know we French stormed Ratisbon:
A mile or so away
On a little mound, Napoléon
Stood on our storming-day;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

II.

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
"That soar, to earth may fall,
"Let once my army-leader Lannes
"Waver at yonder wall,"—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

111

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came thro')
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV.

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace "We've got you Ratisbon!" The Marshal's in the market-place,

"And you'll be there anon" To see your flag-bird flap his vans

"To see your flag-bird flap his vans
"Where I, to heart's desire,

"Perched him!" The Chief's eye flashed; his plans Soared up again like fire.

v.

The Chief's eye flashed; but presently Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes:

"You're wounded!" "Nay," his soldier's pride Touched to the quick, he said:

"I'm killed, Sire!" And, his Chief beside, Smiling the boy fell dead.

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER.

Τ.

GR-R-R—there go, my heart's abhorrence!
Water your damned flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood, would not mine kill you!
What, your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
Oh, that rose has prior claims—
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
Hell dry you up with its flames!

11.

At the meal we sit together:

Salve tibi! I must hear

Wise talk of the kind of weather,

Sort of season, time of year:

Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely

Dare we hope oak-gulls, I doubt:

What's the Latin name for "parsely"!

What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

ш.

Whew! We 'll have our platter burnished,
Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we 're furnished,
And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps -Marked with L. for our initial!
(He, he! There his lily snaps!)

TV.

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores Squats outside the Convent bank, With Sanchicha, telling stories, Steeping tresses in the tank, Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,—Can't I see his dead eye glow Bright, as 'twere a Barbary corsair's? (That is, if he'd let it show!)

v

When he finishes refection, Knife and fork he never lays Cross-w'se to my recollection, As do I, in Jesu's praise. I, the Trinity illustrate,
Drinking watered orange-pulp—
In three sips the Arian frustrate;
While he drains his at one gulp!

vı.

Oh, those melons! If he 's able
We 're to have a feast; so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble,
Keep 'em close-nipped on the sly!

VII.

There's a great text in Galatians,
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations
One sure, if another fails.
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of Heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to Hell, a Manichee?

VIII.

Or, my scrofulous French novel,
On grey paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
If I double down its pages
At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
Ope a sieve and slip it in 't?

IX.

Or there's Satan!—one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
We're so proud of! Hy, Zy, Hine...
'St, there's Vespers! Plena gratia
Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-you swine!

IN A GONDOLA.

He sings.

I send my heart up to thee, all my heart
In this my singing!
For the stars help me, and the sea bears part;
The very night is clinging
Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space
Above me, whence thy face
May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling place.

She speaks.

Say after me, and try to say My very words, as if each word Came from you of your own accord, In your own voice, in your own way: "This woman's heart, and soul, and brain "Are mine as much as this gold chain "She bids me wear; which" (say again) "I choose to make by cherishing "A precious thing, or choose to fling "Over the boat-side, ring by ring." And yet once more say . . . no word more! Since words are only words. Give o'er! Unless you call me, all the same, Familiarly by my pet-name Which, if the Three should hear you call, And me reply to, would proclaim At once our secret to them all: Ask of me, too, command me, blame— Do break down the partition-wall 'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds Curtained in dusk and splendid folds. What's left but—all of me to take? I am the Three's; prevent them, slake Your thirst! 'Tis said, the Arab sage In practising with gems can loose Their subtle spirit in his cruce And leave but ashes: so, sweet mage, Leave them my ashes when thy use Sucks out my soul, thy heritage!

He sings.

1.

Past we glide, and past, and past!
What's that poor Agnese doing
Where they make the shutters fast?
Grey Zanobi's just a-wooing
To his couch the purchased bride:
Past we glide!

2.

Past we glide, and past, and past!
Why 's the Pucci Palace flaring
Like a beacon to the blast?
Guests by hundreds—not one caring
If the dear host's neck were wried:
Past we glide!

She sings.

1.

The Moth's kiss, first!
Kiss me as if you made believe
You were not sure, this eve,
How my face, your flower, had pursed
Its petals up; so, here and there
You brush it, till I grow aware
Who wants me, and wide open burst.

2.

The Bee's kiss, now!
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,
A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so all is rendered up,
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings.

1.

What are we two?
I am a Jew,
And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue,
To a feast of our tribe,
Where they need thee to bribe
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe
Thy . . . Shatter the vision for ever! And now.
As of old, I am I, Thou art Thon!

2.

Say again, what we are?
The sprite of a star,
I lure thee above where the Destinies bar
My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray
Than my pale one announce there is withering away
Some . . . Shatter the vision for ever! And now,
As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou!

He muses.

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
The land's lap or the water's breast?
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows, just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
To lock you, whom release he must;
Which life were best on Summer eves?

He speaks, musing.

Lie back; could thought of mine improve you? From this shoulder let there spring A wing; from this, another wing; Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you. Snow-white must they spring, to blend With your flesh, but I intend They shall deepen to the end, Broader, into burning gold, Till both wings crescent-wise enfold Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet As if a million sword-blades hurled Defiance from you to the world!

Rescue me thou, the only real!
And scare away this mad Ideal
That came, nor motions to depart!
Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art.

Still he muses.

1.

What if the Three should catch at last Thy serenader? While there 's cast Paul's cloak about my head, and fast Gian pinions me, Himself has past His stylet thro' my back; I reel; And . . . is it Thou I feel? 2.

They trail me, these three godless knaves, Past every church that sains and saves, Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves By Lido's wet accursed graves, They scoop mine, roll me to its brink, And . . . on Thy breast I sink!

She replies, musing.

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep, As I do: thus: were Death so unlike Sleep, Caught this way? Death's to fear from flame, or steel Or poison doubtless; but from water—feel!

Go find the bottom! Would you stay me? There! Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass To plait in where the foolish jewel was, I flung away: since you have praised my hair, 'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks.

Row home? must we row home? Too surely Know I where its front 's demurely Over the Giudecca piled; Window just with window mating, Door on door exactly waiting, All's the set face of a child: But behind it, where 's a trace Of the staidness and reserve, And formal lines without a curve, In the same child's playing-face? No two windows look one way O'er the small sea-water thread Below them. Ah, the autumn day I, passing, saw you overhead! First, out a cloud of curtain blew, Then, a sweet cry, and last, came you— To catch your loory that must needs Escape just then, of all times then, To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds, And make me happiest of men. I scarce could breathe to see you reach So far back o'er the balcony, (To catch him ere he climbed too high Above you in the Smyrna peach) That quick the round smooth cord of gold, 'This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,

Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old,
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
Dear loory, may his beak retain
Ever its delicate rose stain
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again!

Stay longer yet, for others' sake Than mine! what should your chamber do? —With all its rarities that ache In silence while day lasts, but wake At night-time and their life renew. Suspended just to pleasure you —That brought against their will together These objects, and, while day lasts, weave Around them such a magic tether That they look dumb: your harp, believe, With all the sensitive tight strings That dare not speak, now to itself Breathes slumbrously as if some elf Went in and out the chords, his wings Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze, As an angel may, between the maze Of midnight palace-pillars, on And on, to sow God's plagues have gone Through guilty glorious Babylon. And while such murmurs flow, the nymph Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell, As the dry limpet for the lymph Come with a tune he knows so well. And how your statues' hearts must swell! And how your pictures must descend To see each other, friend with friend! Oh, could you take them by surprise, You'd find Schidone's eager Duke Doing the quaintess courtesies To that prim Saint by Haste-thee Luke: And, deeper into her rock den, Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen You'd find retreated from the ken Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser-As if the Tizian thinks of her, And is not, rather, gravely bent On seeing for himself what toys Are these, his progeny invent, What litter now the board employs

Whereon he signed a document That got him murdered! Each enjoys Its night so well, you cannot break The sport up, so, indeed must make More stay with me, for others' sake.

She speaks.

1.

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say, Is used to tie the jasmine back. That overfloods my room with sweets, Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets. My Zanze: if the ribbon's black, The Three are watching; keep away.

9

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreathe A mesh of water-weeds about Its prow, as if he unaware Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair That I may throw a paper out As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigliant taper; safe are we! Only one minute more to-night with me? Resume your past self of a month ago! Be you the bashful gallant, I will be The lady with the colder breast than snow: Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand More than I touch yours when I step to land, And say, All thanks, Siora!—

Heart to heart,

And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we part, Clasp me, and make me thine, as mine thou art!

He is surprised, and stabbed.

It was ordained to be so, Sweet,—and best Comes now, beneath thine eyes, and on thy breast. Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards! Care Only to put aside thy beauteous hair My blood will hurt! The Three, I do not scorn To death, because they never lived: but I Have lived indeed, and so--(yet one more kiss)—can die!

ARTEMIS PROLOGUIZES.

I AM a Goddess of the ambrosial courts, And save by Here, Queen of Pride, surpassed By none whose temples whiten this the world. Thro' Heaven I roll my lucid moon along; I shed in Hell o'er my pale people peace; On Earth, I, caring for the creatures, guard Each pregnant yellow wolf and fox-bitch sleek, And every feathered mother's callow brood, And all that love green haunts and loneliness. Of men, the chaste adore me, hanging crowns Of poppies red to blackness, bell and stem, Upon my image at Athenai here; And this dead Youth, Asclepios bends above, Was dearest to me. He my buskined step To follow thro' the wild-wood leafy ways, And chase the panting stag, or swift with darts Stop the swift ounce, or lay the leopard low, Neglected homage to another God: Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight smoke Of tapers lulled, in jealousy dispatched A noisome lust that, as the gadbee stings. Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for himself The son of Theseus her great absent spouse. Hippolutos exclaiming in his rage Against the miserable Queen, she judged Life insupportable, and, pricked at heart An Amazonian stranger's race should dare To scorn her, perished by the murderous cord: Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll The fame of him her swerving made not swerve. Which Theseus read, returning, and believed, So, exiled in the blindness of his wrath, The man without a crime, who, last as first, Loyal, divulged not to his sire the truth. Now Theseus from Poseidon had obtained That of his wishes should be granted Three And this he imprecated straight—alive May ne'er Hippolutos reach other lands! Poseidon heard, ai ai! And scarce the prince Had stepped into the fixed boots of the car, That give the feet a stay against the strength

Of the Henetian horses, and around His body flung the reins, and urged their speed Along the rocks and shingles of the shore, When from the gaping wave a monster flung His obscene body in the coursers' path! These, mad with terror as the sea-bull sprawled Wallowing about their feet, lost care of him That reared them; and the master-chariot-pole Snapping beneath their plunges like a reed, Hippolutos, whose feet were trammelled fast, Was yet dragged forward by the circling rein Which either hand directed; nor was quenched The frenzy of that flight before each trace, Wheel-spoke and splinter of the woeful car, Each boulder-stone, sharp stub, and spiny shell, Huge fish-bone wrecked and wreathed amid the sands On that detested beach, was bright with blood And morsels of his flesh: then fell the steeds Head-foremost, crashing in their mooned fronts, Shivering with sweat, each white eye horror-fixed. His people, who had witnessed all afar, Bore back the ruins of Hippolutos. But when his sire, too swoln with pride, rejoiced, (Indomitable as a man foredoomed) That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his prayer, I, in a flood of glory visible, Stood o'er my dying votary, and deed By deed revealed, as all took place, the truth. Then Theseus lay the woefullest of men. And worthily; but ere the death-veils hid His face, the murdered prince full pardon breathed To his rash sire. Whereat Athenai wails. So I, who ne'er forsake my votaries, Lest in the cross-way none the honey-cake Should tender, not pour out the dog's hot life; Lest at my fane the priests disconsolate Should dress my image with some faded poor Few crowns, made favours of, nor dare object Such slackness to my worshippers who turn The trusting heart and loaded hand elsewhere, As they had climbed Oulumpos to report Of Artemis and nowhere found her throne— I interposed: and, this eventful night, While round the funeral pyre the populace Stood with fierce light on their black robes that blind Each sobbing head, while yet their hair they clipped O'er the dead body of their withered prince, And, in his palace, Theseus prostrated

On the cold hearth, his brow cold as the slab 'Twas bruised on, groaned away the heavy grief-As the pyre fell, and down the cross logs crashed, Sending a crowd of sparkles thro' the night, And the gay fire, elate with mastery, Towered like a serpent o'er the clotted jars Of wine, dissolving oils and frankincense, And splendid gums, like gold,—inv potency Conveyed the perished man to my retreat In the thrice venerable forest here. And this white-bearded Sage who squeezes now The berried plant, is Phoibos' son of fame, Asclepios, whom my radiant brother taught The doctrine of each herb and flower and root, To know their secret'st virtue and express The saving soul of all—who so has soothed With layers the torn brow and murdered checks, Composed the hair and brought its gloss again, And called the red bloom to the pale skin back, And laid the strips and jagged ends of flesh Even once more, and slacked the sinew's knot Of every tortured limb—that now he lies As if mere sleep possessed him underneath These interwoven oaks and pines. Oh, cheer, Divine presenter of the healing rod Thy snake, with ardent throat and lulling eye, Twines his lithe spires around! I say, much cheer! Proceed thou with thy wisest pharmacies! And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-nymphs, Ply, as the Sage directs, these buds and leaves That strew the turf around the Twain! While I Await, in fitting silence, the event.

WARING.

I.

I.

What's become of Waring Since he gave us all the slip, Chose land-travel or seafaring, Boots and chest, or staff and scrip, Rather than pace up and down Any longer London-town? 11.

Who'd have guessed it from his lip, Or his brow's accustomed bearing, On the night he thus took ship, Or started landward?—little caring For us, it seems, who supped together. (Friends of his too, I remember) And walked home thro' the merry weather, The snowiest in all December; I left his arm that night myself For what 's-his-name's the new prose-poet. That wrote the book there, on the shelf-How, for sooth, was I to know it If Waring meant to glide away Like a ghost at break of day? Never looked he half so gay!

III.

He was prouder than the Devil: How he must have cursed our revel! Ay, and many other meetings, Indoor visits, outdoor greetings, As up and down he paced this London, With no work done, but great works undone, Where scarce twenty knew his name. Why not, then, have earlier spoken, Written, bustled? Who's to blame If your silence kept unbroken? "True, but there were sundry jottings, "Stray-leaves, fragments, blurrs and blottings,

"Certain first steps were achieved

"Already which"—(is that your meaning?)

"Had well borne out whoe'er believed

"In more to come!" But who goes gleaning Hedge-side chance-blades, while full-sheaved Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening Pride alone, puts forth such claims O'er the day's distinguished names.

IV.

Meantime, how much I loved him, I find out now I 've lost him: I, who cared not if I moved him, Who could so carelessly accost him, Henceforth never shall get free Of his ghostly company, His eyes that just a little wink As deep I go into the merit

Of this and that distinguished spirit— His cheeks' raised colour, soon to sink, As long I dwell on some stupendous And tremendous (Heaven defend us!) Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous Demoniaco-seraphic Penman's latest piece of graphic. Nay, my very wrist grows warm With his dragging weight of arm! E'en so, swimmingly appears, Thro' one's after-supper musings, Some lost Lady of old years, With her beauteous vain endeavour, And goodness unrepaid as ever; The face, accustomed to refusings, We, pupples that we were . . . Oh never Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled Being aught like false, forsooth, to? Telling aught but honest truth to? What a sin, had we centupled Its possessor's grace and sweetness! No! she heard in its completeness Truth, for truth 's a weighty matter, And, truth at issue, we can't flatter! Well, 'tis done with: she 's exempt From damning us thro' such a sally; And so she glides, as down a valley, Taking up with her contempt, Past our reach; and in, the flowers Shut her unregarded hours.

v.

Oh, could I have him back once more,
This Waring, but one half-day more!
Back, with the quiet face of yore,
So hungry for acknowledgment
Like mine! I'd fool him to his bent!
Feed, should not he, to heart's content?
I'd say, "to only have conceived
"Your great works, tho' they ne'er make progress,
"Surpasses all we've yet achieved!"
I'd lie so, I should be believed.
I'd make such havoc of the claims
Of the day's distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
Her sharp-toothed golden-crowned child!
Or, as one feasts a creature rarely

Captured here, unreconciled To capture; and completely gives Its pettish humours licence, barely Requiring that it lives.

VI.

Ichabod, Ichabod, The glory is departed! Travels Waring East away? Who, of knowledge, by hearsay, Reports a man upstarted Somewhere as a God, Hordes grown European-hearted, Millions of the wild made tame On a sudden at his fame? In Vishnu-land what Avatar? Or who, in Moscow, toward the Czar, With the demurest of footfalls Over the Kremlin's pavement, bright With serpentine and syenite, Steps, with five other Generals, That simultaneously take snuff, For each to have pretext enough To kerchiefwise unfurl his sash Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff To hold fast where a steel chain snaps, And leave the grand white neck no gash? Waring, in Moscow, to those rough Cold northern natures borne, perhaps, Like the lambwhite maiden dear From the circle of mute kings, Unable to repress the tear, Each as his sceptre down he flings, To Dian's fane at Taurica, Where now a captive priestess, she alway Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach, As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry Amid their barbarous twitter! In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter! Ay, most likely 'tis in Spain That we and Waring meet again— Now, while he turns down that cool narrow lane Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid All fire and shine—abrupt as when there's slid Its stiff gold blazing pall

From some black coffin-lid. Or, best of all, I love to think The leaving us was just a feint; Back here to London did he slink: And now works on without a wink Of sleep, and we are on the brink Of something great in fresco-paint Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor, Up and down and o'er and o'er He splashes, as none splashed before Since great Caldara Polidore: Or Music means this land of ours Some favour yet, to pity won By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers,— "Give me my so long promised son, "Let Waring end what I begun!" Then down he creeps and out he steals Only when the night conceals His face—in Kent 'tis cherry-time, Or, hops are picking; or, at prime Of March, he wanders as, too happy, Years ago when he was young, Some mild eve when woods grew sappy, And the early moths had sprung To life from many a trembling sheath Woven the warm boughs beneath; While small birds said to themselves What should soon be actual song, And young gnats, by tens and twelves, Made as if they were the throng That crowd around and carry aloft The sound they have nursed, so sweet and pure Out of a myriad noises soft, Into a tone that can endure Amid the noise of a July noon, When all God's creatures crave their boon. All at once and all in tune. And get it, happy as Waring then, Having first within his ken What a man might do with men, And far too glad, in the even-glow, To mix with your world he meant to take Into his hand he told you, so-And out of it his world to make, To contract and to expand As he shut or oped his hand. Oh, Waring, what 's to really be?

A clear stage and a crowd to see! Some Garrick—say—out shall not he The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck' Or, where most unclean beasts are rife, Some Junius—am I right?—shall tuck His sleeve, and out with flaying-knife! Some Chatterton shall have the luck Of calling Rowley into life! Some one shall somehow run a muck With this old world, for want of strife Sound asleep: contrive, contrive To rouse us, Waring! Who's alive? Our men scarce seem in earnest now: Distinguished names!—but 'tis, somehow. As if they played at being names Still more distinguished, like the games Of children. Turn our sport to earnest With a visage of the sternest! Bring the real times back, confessed Still better than our very best!

II.

I.

"When I last saw Waring . . ."
(How all turned to him who spoke—You saw Waring? Truth or joke? In land-travel, or seafaring?—

TT.

"We were sailing by Triest,

"Where a day or two we harboured:

"A sunset was in the West,

"When, looking over the vessel's side,

"One of our company espied A sudden speck to larboard.

- "And, as a sea-duck flies and swims "At once, so came the light craft up,
- "With its sole lateen sail that trims
- "And turns (the water round its rims
- "Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
 "And by us like a fish it curled,
- "And drew itself up close beside,
 "Its great sail on the instant furled,
- "And o'er its planks, a shrill voice cried,

- "(A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
- "'Buy wine of us, you English Brig?
- "'Or fruit, tobacco and cigars?
- "'A Pilot for you to Triest?
- "' Without one, look you ne'er so big,
- "' They 'll never let you up the bay!
- "' We natives should know best."
- "I turned, and 'just those fellows' way,'
- "Our captain said, 'The long-shore thieves
- "' Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

- "In truth, the boy leaned laughing back;
- "And one, half-hidden by his side
- "Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
- "With great grass hat, and kerchief black,
- "Who looked up, with his kingly throat,
- "Said somewhat, while the other shook
- "His hair back from his eyes to look
- "Their longest at us; then the boat,
- "I know not how, turned sharply round,
- "Laying her whole side on the sea
- "As a leaping fish does; from the lee
- "Into the weather, cut somehow
- "Her sparkling path beneath our bow;
- "And so went off, as with a bound,
- "Into the rose and golden half
- "Of the sky, to overtake the sun,
- "And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
- "Its singing cave; yet I caught one
- "Glance ere away the heat quite passed,
- "And neither time nor toil could mar
- "Those features: so I saw the last
- "Of Waring!"-You? Oh, never star
- Was lost here, but it rose afar!

Look East, where whole new thousands are!

In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI.

I.

I know a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives First when he visits, last, too, when he leaves The world; and, vainly favoured, it repays The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze By no change of its large calm front of snow. And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know, He cannot have perceived, that changes ever At his approach; and, in the lost endeavour To live his life, has parted, one by one, With all a flower's true graces, for the grace Of being but a foolish mimic sun, With ray-like florets round a disk-like face. Men nobly call by many a name the Mount, As over many a land of theirs its large Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe Is reared, and still with old names, fresh ones vie, Each to its proper praise and own account: Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sportively.

II.

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look Across the waters to this twilight nook, —The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook!

TIT.

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed?
Go! Saying ever as thou dost proceed,
That I, French Rudel, choose for my device
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
Before its idol. See! These inexpert
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt
The woven picture; 'tis a woman's skill
Indeed; but nothing baffled me, so, ill
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed
On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees
On my flower's breast as on a platform broad:
But, as the flower's concern is not for these
But solely for the sun, so men applaud
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
But to the East—the East! Go, say this, Pilgrim dear:

CRISTINA.

1.

She should never have looked at me,
If she meant I should not love her!
There are plenty . . men, you call such,
I suppose . . she may discover
All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them:
But I'm not so, and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

II.

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
But I can't tell . . . there 's my weakness . .
What her look said!—no vile cant, sure,
About "need to strew the bleakness
"Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,
"That the Sea feels"—no "strange yearning
"That such souls have, most to lavish
"Where there's chance of least returning."

III.

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

IV.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
Whereby swoln ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
Which for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a life-time
That away the rest have trifled.

v.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 'tis resting merely,
And hence, fleets again for ages:
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle?

VI.

Else it loses what it lived for,
And eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses, if you choose it,
But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt, as, looking at me,
Mine and her soul rushed together?

VII.

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,
The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever:
Never fear 'but there's provision
Of the Devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture!
—Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture.

VIII.

Such am I: the secret's mine now!

She has lost me—I have gained her!

Her soul's mine: and, thus, grown perfect,

I shall pass my life's remainder,

Life will just hold out the proving

Both our powers, alone and blended—

And then, come the next life quickly!

This world's use will have been ended.

1.—MÁDHOUSE CELL.

JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDITATION.

THERE 's Heaven above, and night by night, I look right thro' its gorgeous roof;

No suns and moons, tho' e'er so bright,

Avail to stop me; splendour-proof,

I keep the broods of stars aloof:

For I intend to get to God,

For 'tis to God I speed so fast, For in God's breast, my own abode,

Those shoals of dazzling glory past,

I lay my spirit down at last

I lie where I have always lain,

God smiles as he has always smiled;

Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,

Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled The Heavens, God thought on me his child;

Ordained a life for me, arrayed

Its circumstances, every one

To the minutest; ay, God said

This head this hand should rest upon

Thus, ere he fasnioned star or sun.

And having thus created me,

Thus rooted me, he bade me grow,

Guiltless for ever, like a tree

That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know

The law by which it prospers so:

But sure that thought and word and deed All go to swell his love for me,

Me, made because that love had need

Of something irrevocably

Pledged solely its content to be.

Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,—

No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop!

I have God's warrant, could I blend

All hideous sins, as in a cup, To drink the mingled venoms up,

Secure my nature will convert

The draught to blossoming gladness fast,

While sweet dews turn to the gourd's hurt, And bloat, and while they bloat it, blast,

As from the first its lot was cast.

For as I lie, smiled on, full fed By unexhausted power to bless, I gaze below on Hell's fierce bed, And those its waves of flame oppress, Swarming in ghastly wretchedness; Whose life on earth aspired to be One altar-smoke, so pure!—to win If not love like God's love to me, At least to keep his anger in, And all their striving turned to sin! Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white With prayer, the broken-hearted nun, The martyr, the wan acolyte, The incense-swinging child,—undone Before God fashioned star or sun! God, whom I praise; how could I praise, If such as I might understand, Make out, and reckon on, his ways, And bargain for his love, and stand, Paying a price, at his right hand?

II.—MADHOUSE CELL.

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER.

THE rain set early in to-night, The sullen wind was soon awake, It tore the elm-tops down for spite, And did its worst to vex the lake, I listened with heart fit to break; When glided in Porphyria: straight She shut the cold out and the storm, And kneeled and made the cheerless grate Blaze up, and all the cottage warm; Which done, she rose, and from her form Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl, And laid her soiled gloves by, untied Her hat and let the damp hair fall, And, last, she sate down by my side And called me. When no voice replied, She put my arm about her waist, And made her smooth white shoulder bare. And all her yellow hair displaced,

And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,

And spread o'er all her yellow hair,

Murmuring how she loved me; she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,

To set its struggling passion free

From pride, and vainer ties dissever, And give herself to me for ever: But passion sometimes would prevail,

Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain

A sudden thought of one so pale For love of her, and all in vain; So, she was come thro' wind and rain.

Be sure I looked up at her eyes

Proud, very proud; at last I knew Porphyria worshipped me; surprise

Made my heart swell, and still it grew

While I debated what to do.

That moment she was mine, mine, fair, Perfectly pure and good: I found

A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,

And strangled her. No pain felt she; I am quite sure she felt no pain.

As a shut bud that holds a bee
I warily oped her lids; again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress

About her neck; her cheek once more Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:

I propped her head up as before, Only, this time my shoulder bore Her head, which droops upon it still:

The smiling rosy little head, So glad it has its utmost will,

That all it scorned at once is fled, And I, its love, am gained instead! Porphyria's love: she guessed not how Her darling one wish would be heard.

And thus we sit together now,

And all night long we have not stirred, And yet God has not said a word!

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR.

1842.

ı.

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

II.

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

III

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned Homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

IV.

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride!

DRAMATIC LYRICS.

v.

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I,loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
As I ride, as I ride,
All that's meant me: satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride!

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN;

A CHILD'S STORY.

(WRITTEN FOR AND INSCRIBED TO, W. M. THE YOUNGER.)

L.

Hamelin Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side;
A pleasanter spot you never spied;
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

II.

Rats.

They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cook's own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats,
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking

III.

In fifty different sharps and flats.

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking:
"'Tis clear," cried they, "our Mayor's a noddy;
"And as for our Corporation—shocking

"To think we buy gowns lined with ermine "For dolts that can't or won't determine

"What's best to rid us of our vermin!" You hope, because you're old and obese,

"To find in the furry civic robe ease?

"Rouse up, Sirs! Give your brains a racking

"To find the remedy we're lacking,

"Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!" At this the Mayor and Corporation Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV.

An hour they sate in council, At length the Mayor broke silence: "For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell "I wish I were a mile hence! "It's easy to bid one rack one's brain-"I'm sure my poor head aches again "I've scratched it so, and all in vain. "Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!" Just as he said this, what should hap At the chamber door but a gentle tap? "Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that?" (With the Corporation as he sat, Looking little though wondrous fat; Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister Than a too-long-opened oyster, Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous For a plate of turtle green and glutinous) "Only a scraping of shoes on the mat? "Anything like the sound of a ra "Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

v

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, looking bigger:
And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red;
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in—
There was no guessing his kith and kin!
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire:
Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,
"Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
"Had walked this way from his painted tomb-stone

VI.

He advanced to the council-table: And, "Please your honours," said he, "I'm able, "By means of a secret charm, to draw "All creatures living beneath the sun, "That creep, or swim, or fly, or run, "After me so as you never saw! "And I chiefly use my charm "On creatures that do people harm, "The mole, and toad, and newt, and viper; "And people call me the Pied Piper." (And here they noticed round his neck A scarf of red and yellow stripe, To match with his coat of the self-same cheque; And at the scarf's end hung a pipe; And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying As if impatient to be playing Upon this pipe, as low it dangled Over his vesture so old-fangled.) "Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am, "In Tartary I freed the Cham, "Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats; "I eased in Asia the Nizam "Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats: "And, as for what your brain bewilders, "If I can rid your town of rats "Will you give me a thousand guilders?" "One? fifty thousand!"—was the exclamation Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII.

Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled
Like a candle flame where salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;

You heard as if an army muttered; And the muttering grew to a grumbling; And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling; And out of the houses the rats came tumbling. Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats, Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats, Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,

Fathers, mothers, uncles cousins,

Cocking tails and pricking whiskers, Families by tens and dozens, Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives— Followed the Piper for their lives. From street to street he piped advancing, And step for step they followed dancing, Until they came to the river Weser, Wherein all plunged and perished -Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar, Swam across and lived to carry (As he the manuscript he cherished) To Rat-land home his commentary, Which was, "At the first shrill notes of the pipe, "I heard a sound as of scraping tripe, "And putting apples, wondrous ripe, "Into a cider-press's gripe: "And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards, "And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards, "And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks, "And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks "And it seemed as if a voice "(Sweeter far than by harp or by psalterý "Is breathed) called out, Oh rats, rejoice! "The world is grown to one vast drysaltery! "So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon, "Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon! "And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon, "All ready staved, like a great sun shone "Glorious scarce an inch before me,

VIII.

"Just as methought it said, Come, bore me! "—I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

You should have heard the Hamelin people Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple; "Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles! "Poke out the nests and block up the holes! "Consult with carpenters and builders, "And leave in our town not even a trace "Of the rats!"—when suddenly up the face Of the Piper perked in the market-place, With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

IX.

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue; So did the Corporation too. For council dinners made rare havock With Clayet, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;

And half the money would replenish Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish. To pay this sum to a wandering fellow With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!

- "Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink
- "Our business was done at the river's brink;
- "We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
- "And what's dead can't come to life, I think.
- "So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink
- "From the duty of giving you something for drink,
- "And a matter of money to put in your poke;
- "But, as for the guilders, what we spoke
- "Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
- · Beside, our losses have made us thrifty;
- · A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

x.

The piper's face fell, and he cried,

- "No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
- "I've promised to visit by dinner-time
- "Bagdat, and accept the prime
- "Of the Head Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
- "For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
- "Of a nest of scorpions no survivor-
- "With him I proved no bargain-driver,
- "With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
- "And folks who put me in a passion
- "May find me pipe to another fashion."

XI.

- "How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I 'li prook
- "Being worse treated than a Cook?
- "Insulted by a lazy ribald
- "With idle pipe and vesture piebald?
- "You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,
- "Blow your pipe there till you burst!"

XII.

Once more he stept into the street;

And to his lips again

Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;

And ere he blew three notes (such sweet

Soft notes as yet musician's cunning Never gave the enraptured air)

There was a rustling, that seemed like a bustling Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling, Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering, Little hands clapping, and little tongues chattering, And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering, Out came the children running.

All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood As if they were changed into blocks of wood. Unable to move a step, or cry To the children merrily skipping by— And could only follow with the eye That joyous crowd at the Piper's back. But how the Mayor was on the rack, And the wretched Council's bosoms beat. As the Piper turned from the High Street To where the Weser rolled its waters Right in the way of their sons and daughters! However he turned from South to West. And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed. And after him the children pressed; Great was the joy in every breast. "He never can cross that mighty top "He's forced to let the piping drop, "And we shall see our children stop!" When, lo, as they reached the mountain's side. A wondrous portal opened wide, As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed; And the Piper advanced and the children followed. And when all were in to the very last, The door in the mountain side shut fast. Did I say, all? No! One was lame, And could not dance the whole of the way; And in after years, if you would blame His sadness, he was used to say,— It's dull in our town since my playmates left! 'I can't forget that I 'm bereft Of all the pleasant sights they see, "Which the Piper also promised me; "For he led us, he said, to a joyous land, "Joining the town and just at hand, "Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew, " And flowers put forth a fairer hue, " And everything was strange and new; "The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here, "And their dogs outran our fallow deer,

- "And honey-bees had lost their stings,
- "And horses were born with eagles' wings;
- "And just as I became assured
- "My lame foot would he speedily cured,
- "The music stopped and I stood still,
- "And found myself outside the Hill,
- "Left alone against my will,
- "To go now limping as before,
- "And never hear of that country more!"

XIV.

Alas, alas for Hamelin!

There came into many a burgher's pate A text which says, that Heaven's Gate

Opes to the Rich at as easy rate As the needle's eye takes a camel in!

The Mayor sent East, West, North, and South To offer the Piper by word of mouth,

Wherever it was men's lot to find him, Silver and gold to his heart's content,

If he'd only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,
And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,

They made a decree that lawyers never Should think their records dated duly If, after the day of the month and year, These words did not as well appear,

These words did not as well appear,
"And so long after what happened here
"On the Twenty-second of July,

"Thirteen hundred and Seventy-six;" And the better in memory to fix The place of the Children's last retreat, They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—Where any one playing on pipe or tabor Was sure for the future to lose his labour.

Nor suffered they Hostelry or Tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern

They wrote the story on a column,
And on the Great Church Window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away;
And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe
Of alien people that ascribe

The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbours lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

xv.

So, Willy, let you and me be wipers Of scores out with all men—especially pipers: And, whether they pipe us free, from rats or from mice, If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise.

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX."

[16-.]

I.

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he; I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three; "Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew; "Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through; Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest, And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

11.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place; I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight, Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right, Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit, Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear; At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see; At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be; And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime, So Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!

IV.

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun, And against him the cattle stood black every one, To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last With resolute shoulders, each butting away The haze. as some bluff river headland its spray

v.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track; And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance! And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on

VΤ

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned: and cried Joris, "Stay spur! "Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her, "We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick wheeze Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees, And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank, As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I, Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky; The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh, 'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff; Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white, And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

VIII.

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone; And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate, With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim, And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim

ΤX

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall, Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all, Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear, Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer; Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good, Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

x.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round
As I sate with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground,
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent

PICTOR IGNOTUS.

[FLORENCE, 15—.]

I could have painted pictures like that youth's Ye praise so. How my soul springs up! No bar Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes Never did fate forbid me, star by star, To outburst on your night with all my gift Of fires from God: nor would my flesh have shrunk From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift And wide to Heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk To the centre, of an instant; or around Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan The license and the limit, space and bound, Allowed to Truth made visible in Man. And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw, Over the canvas could my hand have flung, Each face obedient to its passion's law, Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue; Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood, A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace, Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place, Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up, And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,— O Human faces, hath it spilt my cup? What did ye give me that I have not saved? Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!) Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth, As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell, To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South, or North, Bound for the calmly satisfied great State Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went, Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,

Through old streets named afresh from its event,

Till it reached home, where learned Age should greet
My face, and Youth, the star not yet distinct

Above his hair, lie learning at my feet !— Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked

With love about, and praise, till life should end, And then not go to Heaven, but linger here.

Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,—
The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear!

But a voice abanged it! Glimpeg of such sights

But a voice changed it! Glimpses of such sights
Have scared me, like the revels thro' a door
Of some strange House of Idols at its rites;

This world seemed not the world it was before! Mixed with my loving trusting ones there trooped

. . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun To press on me and judge me? Tho' I stooped

Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,

They drew me forth, and spite of me. . enough!

These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,
Count them for garniture and household-stuff,

And where they live our pictures needs must live.

And see their faces, listen to their prate, Partakers of their daily pettiness,

Discussed of,—"This I love, or this I hate,
"This likes me more and this affects me los

"This likes me more, and this affects me less!" Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles

My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint These endless cloisters and eternal aisles

With the same series, Virgin, Babe, and Saint,

With the same cold, calm, beautiful regard, At least no merchant traffics in my heart;

The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward

Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart :

Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine

While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke, They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,

'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke. So die, my pictures; surely, gently die!

Oh, youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth? Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry?

Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth?

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND.

THAT second time they hunted me From hill to plain, from shore to sea, And Austria, hounding far and wide Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side, Breathed hot and instant on my trace,— I made six days a hiding-place Of that dry green old aqueduct Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked The fire-flies from the roof above, Bright creeping thro' the moss they love. -How long it seems since Charles was lost! Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed The country in my very sight; And when that peril ceased at night, The sky broke out in red dismay With signal-fires; well, there I lay Close covered o'er in my recess, Up to the neck in ferns and cress, Thinking on Metternich our friend, And Charles's miserable end, And much beside, two days; the third, Hunger o'ercame me when I heard The peasants from the village go To work among the maize; you know, With us, in Lombardy, they bring Provisions packed on mules, a string With little bells that cheer their task, And casks, and boughs on every cask To keep the sun's heat from the wine; These I let pass in jingling line, And, close on them, dear noisy crew, The peasants from the village too; For at the very rear would troop Their wives and sisters in a group To help, I knew; when these had passed, I threw my glove to strike the last, Taking the chance: she did not start, Much less cry out, but stooped apart One instant, rapidly glanced round, And saw me beckon from the ground:

A wild bush grows and hides my crypt, She picked my glove up while she stripped A branch off, then rejoined the rest With that; my glove lay in her breast: Then I drew breath: they disappeared: It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone Exactly where my glove was thrown. Meanwhile came many thoughts; on me Rested the hopes of Italy; I had devised a certain tale Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail Persuade a peasant of its truth; I meant to call a freak of youth This hiding, and give hopes of pay, And no temptation to betray. But when I saw that woman's face. Its calm simplicity of grace, Our Italy's own attitude In which she walked thus far, and stood, Planting each naked foot so firm, To crush the snake and spare the worm— At first sight of her eyes, I said, "I am that man upon whose head "They fix the price, because I hate "The Austrians over us: the State "Will give you gold-oh, gold so much, "If you betray me to their clutch! "And be your death, for aught I know, "If once they find you saved their foe. "Now, you must bring me food and drink, "And also paper, pen, and ink, "And carry safe what I shall write "To Padua, which you'll reach at night "Before the Duomo shuts; go in, "And wait till Tenebræ begin; "Walk to the Third Confessional, "Between the pillar and the wall, "And kneeling whisper whence comes peace? "Say it a second time; then cease; "And if the voice inside returns. " From Christ and Freedom: what concerns "The cause of Peace?-for answer, slip " My letter where you placed your lip; "Then come back happy we have done

"Our mother service—I, the son,
As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand In the same place, with the same eyes: I was no surer of sun-rise Than of her coming: we conferred Of her own prospects, and I heard She had a lover—stout and tall, She said—then let her eyelids fall, "He could do much"—as if some doubt Entered her heart,—then, passing out, "She could not speak for others—who "Had other thoughts; herself she knew:" And so she brought me drink and food. After four days, the scouts pursued Another path: at last arrived The help my Paduan friends contrived To furnish me: she brought the news: For the first time I could not choose But kiss her hand and lay my own Upon her head—"This faith was shown "To Italy, our mother;—she "Uses my hand and blesses thee!" She followed down to the sea-shore: I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought Concerning—much less wished for—aught Beside the good of Italy, For which I live and mean to die! I never was in love; and since Charles proved false, nothing could convince My inmost heart I had a friend; However, if I pleased to spend Real wishes on myself—say, Three— I know at least what one should be; I would grasp Metternich until I felt his red wet throat distil In blood thro' these two hands: and next, —Nor much for that am I perplexed— Charles, perjured traitor, for his part, Should die slow of a broken heart Under his new employers: last —Ah, there, what should I wish? Do I grow old and out of strength.— If I resolved to seek at length My father's house again, how scared They all would look, and unprepared! My brothers live in Austria's pay -Disowned me long ago, men say;

And all my early mates who used To praise me so—perhaps induced More than one early step of mine— Are turning wise; while some opine "Freedom grows License," some suspect "Haste breeds Delay," and recollect They always said, such premature Beginnings never could endure! So, with a sullen "All's for best," The land seems settling to its rest. I think, then, I should wish to stand This evening in that dear, lost land, Over the sea the thousand miles, And know if yet that woman smiles With the calm smile; some little farm She lives in there, no doubt; what harm If I sate on the door-side bench, And, while her spindle made a trench Fantastically in the dust, Inquired of all her fortunes—just Her children's ages and their names, And what may be the husband's aims For each of them—I'd talk this out, And sit there, for an hour about, Then kiss her hand once more, and lay Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how ... It steals the time! To business now

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY.

[PIANO DI SORRENTO.]

Fortù, Fortù, my beloved one,
Sit here by my side,
On my knees put up both little feet!
I was sure, if I tried,
I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco:
Now, open your eyes—
Let me keep you amused till he vanish
In black from the skies,
With telling my memories over
As you tell your beads;
All the memories plucked at Sorrento
—The flowers, or the weeds.

Time for rain! for your long hot dry Autumn Had net-worked with brown

The white skin of each grape on the bunches, Marked like a quail's crown,

Those creatures you make such account of, Whose heads,—specked with white

Over brown like a great spider's back,

As I told you last night,-

Your mother bites off for her supper; Red-ripe as could be.

Pomegranates were chapping and splitting In halves on the tree:

And betwixt the loose walls of great flintstone, Or in the thick dust

On the path, or straight out of the rock side, Wherever could thrust

Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower Its yellow face up,

For the prize were great butterflies fighting, Some five for one cup.

So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning, What change was in store,

By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets Which woke me before

I could open my shutter, made fast With a bough and a stone,

And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs, Sole lattice that's known!

Quick and sharp rang the rings down the net-poles, While, busy beneath,

Your priest and his brother tugged at them, The rain in their teeth:

And out upon all the flat house-roofs Where split figs lay drying,

The girls took the frails under cover:

Nor use seemed in trying

To get out the boats and go fishing, For, under the cliff,

Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock. No seeing our skiff

Arrive about noon from Amalfi,

-Our fisher arrive,

And pitch down his basket before us, All trembling alive

With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit,

-You touch the strange lumps,

And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner Of horns and of humps.

Which only the fisher looks grave at, While round him like imps

Cling screaming the children as naked And brown as his shrimps;

Himself too as bare to the middle—

You see round his neck

The string and its brass coin suspended, That saves him from wreck.

But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,

So back to a man

Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards Grape-harvest began:

In the vat, half-way up in our house-side, Like blood the juice spins,

While your brother all bare-legged is dancing Till breathless he grins

Dead-beaten, in effort on effort To keep the grapes under,

Since still when he seems all but master, In pours the fresh plunder

From girls who keep coming and going With basket on shoulder,

And eyes shut against the rain's driving,

Your girls that are older,— For under the hedges of aloe,

And where, on its bed
Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple
Lies pulpy and red,

All the young ones are kneeling and filling Their laps with the snails

Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—Your best of regales,

As to-night will be proved to my sorrow, When, supping in state,

We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen, Three over one plate)

With lasagne so tempting to swallow In slippery ropes,

And gourds fried in great purple slices, That colour of popes.

Meantime, see the grape-bunch they 've brought you,-The rain-water slips

O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe Which the wasp to your lips

Still follows with fretful persistence— Nay, taste, while awake,

This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball, That peels, flake by flake, Like an onion's, each smoother and whiter; Next, sip this weak wine.

From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,

A leaf of the vine,—

And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh
That leaves thro' its juice

The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth . . Scirocco is loose!

Hark! the quick, whistling pelt of the olives Which, thick in one's track,

Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them, Tho' not yet half black!

How the old twisted olive trunks shudder! The medlars let fall

Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees Snap off, figs and all,—

For here comes the whole of the tempest No refuge, but creep

Back again to my side and my shoulder, And listen or sleep.

O how will your country show next week
When all the vine-boughs

Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture The mules and the cows?

Last eve, I rode over the mountains; Your brother, my guide,

Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles

That offered, each side,

Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious,—
Or strip from the sorbs

A treasure, so rosy and wondrous, Of hairy gold orbs!

But my mule picked his sure, sober path out,
Just stopping to neigh

When he recognised down in the valley His mates on their way

With the faggots, and barrels of water;

And soon we emerged
From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow
And still as we urged

Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,

As up still we trudged

Tho' the wild path grew wilder each instant, And place was e'en grudged

'Mid the rock-chasms, and piles of loose stones (Like the loose broken teeth Of some monster, which climbed there to die From the ocean beneath)

Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-weed That clung to the path,

And dark rosemary, ever a-dying, That, 'spite the wind's wrath,

So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,—

And lentisks as staunch

To the stone where they root and bear berries,—And . . . what shows a branch

Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets

Of pale seagreen leaves-

Over all trod my mule with the caution

Of gleaners o'er sheaves,

Still, foot after foot like a lady-

So, round after round,

He climbed to the top of Calvano, And God's own profound

Was above me, and round me the mountains, And under, the sea,

And within me, my heart to bear witness What was and shall be!

Oh Heaven, and the terrible crystal!

No rampart excludes

Your eye from the life to be lived In the blue solitudes!

Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement!

Still moving with you—

For, ever some new head and breast of them Thrusts into view

To observe the intruder—you see it

If quickly you turn
And, before they escape you, surprise them—
They grudge you should learn

How the soft plains they look on, lean over,

And love (they pretend)

—Cower beneath them; the flat sea-pine crouches The wild fruit-trees bend,

E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut—All is silent and grave—

'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty-

How fair, but a slave!

So, I turned to the sea,—and there slumbered As greenly as ever

Those isles of the siren, your Galli; No ages can sever

The Three, nor enable their sister
To join them,—half-way

On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses— No farther to-day;

Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave, Watches breast-high and steady

From under the rock, her bold sister Swum half-way already.

Fortù, shall we sail there together

And see from the sides

Quite new rocks show their faces—new haunts Where the siren abides?

Shall we sail round and round them, close over The rocks, tho' unseen,

That ruffle the grey glassy water

To glorious green?

Then scramble from splinter to splinter, Reach land and explore,

On the largest, the strange square black turret With never a door,

Just a loop to admit the quick lizards; Then, stand there and hear

The birds' quiet singing, that tells us What life is, so clear!

The secret they sang to Ulysses,

When, ages ago,

He heard and he knew this life's secret, I hear and I know!

Ah, see! The sun breaks o'er Calvano—
He strikes the great gloom
And flutters it o'er the mount's gummit

And flutters it o'er the mount's summit In airy gold fume!

All is over! Look out, see the gipsy, Our tinker and smith,

Has arrived, set up bellows and forge, And down-squatted forthwith

To his hammering, under the wall there; One eye keeps aloof

The urchins that itch to be putting

His jews'-harps to proof, While the other, thro' locks of curled wire,

Is watching how sleek

Shines the hog, come to share in the windfalls --An abbot's own check!

All is over! Wake up and come out now, And down let us go,

And see the fine things got in order At Church for the show

If the Sacrament, set forth this evening; To-morrow 's the Feast Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means Of Virgins the least— As you'll hear in the off-hand discourse Which (all nature, no art) The Dominican brother, these three weeks, Was getting by heart. Not a post nor a pillar but 's dizened With red and blue papers; All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar A-blaze with long tapers; But the great masterpiece is the scaffold Rigged glorious to hold All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers And trumpeters bold, Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber, Who, when the priest's hoarse, Will strike us up something that 's brisk For the feast's second course. And then will the flaxen-wigged Image Be carried in pomp Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession The priests mean to stomp. And all round the glad church lie old bottles With gunpowder stopped, Which will be, when the Image re-enters, Religiously popped. And at night from the crest of Calvano Great bonfires will hang, On the plain will the trumpets join chorus, And more poppers bang! At all events, come—to the garden,

As far as the wall,
See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
Till out there shall fall
A scorpion with wide angry nippers!

... "Such trifles"—you say?
Fortù, in my England at home,
Men meet gravely to-day
And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
Is rightcous and wise
—If 'tis proper, Scirocco should vanish
In black from the skies!

THE LOST LEADER.

î.

JUST for a handful of silver he left us. Just for a riband to stick in his coat— Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us. Lost all the others she lets us devote; They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver. So much was theirs who so little allowed: How all our copper had gone for his service! Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud! We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him, Lived in his mild and magnificent eve. Learned his great language, caught his clear accents, Made him our pattern to live and to die! Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us, Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves He alone breaks from the van and the freemen. He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

II.

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence; Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre; Deeds will be done, -- while he boasts his quiescence, Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire: Blot out his name, then,—record one lost soul more, One task more declined, one more footpath untrod, One more triumph for devils, and sorrow for angels, One wrong more to man, one more insult to God! Life's night begins: let him never come back to us! There would be doubt, hesitation and pain, Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight, Never glad confident morning again! Best fight on well, for we taught him,—strike gallantly, Aim at our heart ere we pierce through his own; Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us, Pardoned in Heaven, the first by the throne!

THE LOST MISTRESS.

I.

ALL's over, then—does truth sound bitter As one at first believes? Hark, 'tis the sparrows' good-night twitter About your cottage eaves!

II.

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly, I noticed that, to-day;
One day more bursts them open fully
—You know the red turns gray.

III.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest?

May I take your hand in mine?

Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest

Keep much that I 'll resign:

IV.

For each glance of that eye so bright and black, Though I keep with heart's endeavour,— Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back, Though it stays in my soul for ever!—

v.

—Yet I will but say what mere friends say, Or only a thought stronger;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
Or so very little longer!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD.

ı.

OH, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!

11.

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows—
Hark! where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That 's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower,
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA.

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the north-west died away; Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay; Bluish mid the burning water, full in face of Trafalgar lay: In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned Gibraltar grand

"Here and here did England help me,—how can I help England?"—sav.

Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray, While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT ST. PRAXED'S CHURCH.

[ROME, 15—.]

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity! Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back? Nephews-sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well-She, men would have to be your mother once, Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was! What 's done is done, and she is dead beside, Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since; And as she died so must we die ourselves, And thence ye may perceive the world 's a dream. Life, how and what is it? As here I lie In this state-chamber, dying by degrees, Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask "Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all. St. Praxed's ever was the church for peace; And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know: -Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care; Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South He graced his carrion with, God curse the same! Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side, And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats, And up into the aery dome where live The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk: And I shall fill my slab of basalt there, And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest, With those nine columns round me, two and two. The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands: Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse -Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone, Put me where I may look at him! True peach. Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize! Draw close: that conflagration of my church -What then? So much was saved if aught were missed! My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood, Drop water gently till the surface sinks,

And if ye find . . ah God, I know not, I! . . . Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft, And corded up in a tight olive-frail, Some lump, ah God, of lapis lazuli, Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape, Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast. Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all, That brave Frascati villa with its bath, So, let the blue lump poise between my knees, Like God the Father's globe on both his hands Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay, For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst! Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years: Man goeth to the grave, and where is he? Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? 'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath? The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me, Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so, The Saviour at his sermon on the mount. St. Praxed in a glory, and one Pan Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off, And Moses with the tables . . . but I know Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee. Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope To revel down my villas while I gasp Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at! Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then! 'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve My bath must needs be left behind, alas! One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut, There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world— And have I not St. Praxed's ear to pray Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts, And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs? That 's if ye carve my epitaph aright, Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word, No gaudy ware like Gandolu's second line-Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need! And then how I shall lie through centuries. And hear the blessed mutter of the mass, And see God made and eaten all day long, And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke! For as I lie here, hours of the dead night, Dying in state and by such slow degrees,

I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook, And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point, And let the bed-clothes for a mort-cloth drop Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work: And as you tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts Grow, with a certain humming in my ears, About the life before I lived this life, And this life too, Popes, Cardinals and Priests, St. Praxed at his sermon on the mount, Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes, And new-found agate urns as fresh as day, And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet, —Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend? No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best! Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage. All lapis, all, sons! Else I give the Pope My villas: will ye ever eat my heart? Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick, They glitter like your mother's for my soul, Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze, Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term, And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down, To comfort me on my entablature Whereon I am to lie till I must ask "Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there! For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone— Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat As if the corpse they keep were oozing through— And no more *lapis* to delight the world! Well, go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there, But in a row: and, going, turn your backs -Ay, like departing altar-ministrants, And leave me in my church, the church for peace, That I may watch at leisure if he leers— Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone, As still he envied me, so fair she was!

GARDEN-FANCIES.

I.—THE FLOWER'S NAME.

I.

HERE's the garden she walked across,
Arm in my arm, such a short while since:
Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
Hinders the hinges and makes them wince!
She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
As back with that murmur the wicket swung;
For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
To feed and forget it the leaves among.

TT

Down this side of the gravel-walk
She went while her robe's-edge brushed the box:
And here she paused in her gracious talk
To point me a moth on the milk-white flox.
Roses, ranged in valiant row,
I will never think that she passed you by!
She loves you noble roses, I know;
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie!

TIT.

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name.
What a name! was it love, or praise?
Speech half-asleep, or song half-awake?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

IV.

Roses, if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase!
But do not detain me now; for she lingers
There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

v.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
Stay as you are and be loved for ever!
But, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not,
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never!
For while thus it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle—
Is not the dear mark still to be seen?

VT.

Where I find her not, beauties vanish;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June's twice June since she breathed it with me?
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
Treasure my lady's lightest foot-fall
—Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—
Roses, you are not so fair after all!

II.—SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS.

I.

Plague take all your pedants, say I!

He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
Centuries back was so good as to die,
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land;
This, that was a book in its time,
Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime
Just when the birds sang all together.

TT.

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbute and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.
Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge;
Added up the mortal amount;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

TTT.

Yonder's a plum-tree, with a crevice
An owl would build in, were he but sage;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the middle age.

Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber;
When he 'd be private, there might he spend
Hours alone in his lady's chamber:
Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

IV.

Splash went he, as under he ducked,

—I knew at the bottom rain-drippings stagnate;

Next a handful of blossoms I plucked

To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate;

Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,

Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;

Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf

Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

v.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
A spider had spun his web across,
And sate in the midst with arms a-kimbo:
So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
And, de profundis, accentibus lætis,
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake,
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

VI.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow—
Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks!
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow?
Here 's one stuck in his chapter six!

VII.

How did he like it when the live creatures

Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of trover;
When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet.

VIII.

All that life, and fun, and romping,
All that frisking, and twisting, and coupling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping,
And clasps were cracking, and covers suppling!

As if you had carried sour John Knox
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna, or Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
And danced off the Ballet with trousers and tunic!

IX.

Come, old martyr! What, torment enough is it?
Back to my room shall you take your sweet self!
Good-bye, mother-beetle; husband-eft, sufficit!
See the snug niche I have made on my shelf:
A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover you,
Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be gay,
And with E. on each side, and F. right over you,
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day!

THE LABORATORY.

[ANCIEN REGIME.]

I.

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly, May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely, As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy— Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

11

He is with her; and they know that I know Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears flow While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear Empty church, to pray God in, for them!—I am here.

111

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste, Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste! Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things, Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

TV.

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!
And youder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

v.

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures, What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures! To carry pure death in an earring, a casket, A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree-basket!

VI.

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give, And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live! But to light a pastille, and Elise, with her head, And her breast, and her arms, and her hands, should drop dead!

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too grim! Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim? Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir, And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

VIII.

What a drop! She 's not little, no minion like me—That 's why she ensnared him: this never will free The soul from those strong, great eyes,—say, "No!" To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

IX.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought Could I keep them one-half minute fixed, she would fall, Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

x.

Not that I bid you spare her the pain! Let death be felt and the proof remain; Brand, burn up, bite into its grace— He is sure to remember her dying face!

XI.

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose, It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close: The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee—
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

XII.

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill, You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will! But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's!

THE CONFESSIONAL.

[SPAIN.]

I.

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope, Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope Are lies, and lies—there! thro' my door And ceiling, there! and walls and floor, There, lies, they lie, shall still be hurled, Till spite of them I reach the world!

II.

You think Priests just and holy men! Before they put me in this den, I was a human creature too, With flesh and blood like one of you, A girl that laughed in beauty's pride Like lilies in your world outside.

III.

I had a lover—shame avaunt!
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest, love e'er turned
His heart's own tint: one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

τv

So, next day when the accustomed train Of things grew round my sense again, "That is a sin," I said—and slow With downcast eyes to church I go, And pass to the confession-chair, And tell the old mild father there.

v.

But when I faulter Beltran's name,
"Ha?" quoth the father; "much I blame
"The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?
"Despair not,—strenuously retrieve!
"Nay, I will turn this love of thine

"To lawful love, almost divine.

VI.

" For he is young, and led astray,

"This Beltran, and he schemes, men say, "To change the laws of church and state;

"So, thine shall be an angel's fate,

"Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll

" Its cloud away and save his soul.

VII.

" For, when he lies upon thy breast,

"Thou mayst demand and be possessed

"Of all his plans, and next day steal

"To me, and all those plans reveal, "That I and every priest, to purge

"His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

VIII.

That father's beard was long and white, With love and truth his brow seemed bright; I went back, all on fire with joy, And, that same evening, bade the boy Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free, Something to prove his love of me.

IX.

He told me what he would not tell For hope of Heaven or fear of Hell; And I lay listening in such pride, And, soon as he had left my side, Tripped to the church by morning-light To save his soul in his despite.

x.

I told the father all his schemes, Who were his comrades, what their dreams; "And now make haste," I said, "to pray

"The one spot from his soul away:

"To-night he comes, but not the same

"Will look!" At night he never came.

XI.

Nor next night: on the after-morn, I went forth with a strength new-born: The church was empty; something drew My steps into the street; I knew It led me to the market-place—Where, lo,—on high—the father's face!

XII.

That horrible black scaffold drest—
The stapled block . . God sink the rest!
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
Those knotted hands and naked breast—
Till near one busy hangman pressed—
And—on the neck these arms caressed. . . .

XIII.

No part in aught they hope or fear!
No Heaven with them, no Hell,—and here,
No Earth, not so much space as pens
My body in their worst of dens
But shall bear God and Man my cry—
Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie!

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

ı.

You 'RE my friend:
I was the man the Duke spoke to;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke too;
So, here 's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend!

IT.

Ours is a great wild country: If you climb to our castle's top, I don't see where your eye can stop; For when you've passed the corn-field country, Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed, And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract, And cattle-tract to open-chase, And open-chase to the very base Of the mountain, where, at a funeral pace, Round about, solemn and slow, One by one, row after row, Up and up the pine-trees go, So, like black priests up, and so Down the other side again To another greater, wilder country, That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain, Branched thro' and thro' with many a vein

Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt;
Look right, look left, look straight before,—
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till, at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,
—And the whole is our Duke's country!

III.

I was born the day this present Duke was— (And O, says the song, ere I was old!) In the castle where the other Duke was— (When I was hopeful and young, not old!) I in the Kennel, he in the Bower: We are of like age to an hour. My father was Huntsman in that day; Who has not heard my father say That, when a boar was brought to bay, Three times, four times out of five, With his huntspear he'd contrive To get the killing-place transfixed, And pin him true, both eyes betwixt? And that 's why the old Duke had rather Have lost a salt-pit than my father, And loved to have him ever in call; That's why my father stood in the hall When the old Duke brought his infant out To show the people, and while they passed The wondrous bantling round about, Was first to start at the outside blast As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn. Just a month after the babe was born. "And" quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since "The Duke has got an Heir, our Prince "Needs the Duke's self at his side:" The Duke looked down and seemed to wince, But he thought of wars o'er the world wide, Castles a-fire, men on their march, The toppling tower, the crashing arch; And up he looked, and awhile he eyed The row of crests and shields and banners, Of all achievements after all manners, And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride. The more was his comfort when he died At next year's end, in a velvet suit, With a gilt glove on his hand, and his foot

In a silken shoe for a leather boot, Petticoated like a herald, In a chamber next to an ante-room. Where he breathed the breath of page and groom. What he called stink, and they, perfume: -They should have set him on red Berold, Mad with pride, like fire to manage! They should have got his cheek fresh tannage Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine! Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin! -Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game! Oh for a noble falcon-lanner To flap each broad wing like a banner, And turn in the wind, and dance like flame! Had they broached a cask of white beer from Berlin! -Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine-Put to his lips when they saw him pine, A cup of our own Moldavia fine, Cotnar, for instance, green as May sorrel, And ropy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

IV.

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess Was left with the infant in her clutches, She being the daughter of God knows who: And now was the time to revisit her tribe, So, abroad and afar they went, the two, And let our people rail and gibe At the empty Hall and extinguished fire, As loud as we liked, but ever in vain, Till after long years we had our desire, And back came the Duke and his mother again.

v.

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape;
Full of his travel, struck at himself—
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways—Not he! For in Paris they told the elf
That our rough North land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then,

So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it, This Duke would fain know he was, without being it; 'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it, Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it, He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out. The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-out: And chief in the chase his neck he perilled, On a lathy horse, all legs and length, With blood for bone, all speed, no strength; —They should have set him on red Berold, With the red eye slow consuming in fire, And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire!

VT.

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard: And out of a convent, at the word, Came the Lady, in time of spring. -Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling! That day, I know, with a dozen oaths, I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes, Fit for the chase of urox or buffle In winter-time when you need to muffle; But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure, And so we saw the Lady arrive: My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger! She was the smallest lady alive, Made, in a piece of Nature's madness, Too small, almost, for the life and gladness That over-filled her, as some hive Out of the bears' reach on the high trees Is crowded with its safe merry bees: In truth, she was not hard to please! Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead, Straight at the castle, that 's best indeed To look at from outside the walls: As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls," She as much thanked me as if she had said it, (With her eyes, do you understand?) Because I patted her horse while I led it; And Max, who rode on her other hand, Said, no bird flew past but she enquired What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired— If that was an eagle she saw hover,— If the green and gray bird on the field was the plover. When suddenly appeared the Duke, And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed On to my hand,—as with a rebuke, And as if his backbone were not jointed,

The Duke stepped rather aside than forward, And welcomed her with his grandest smile; And, mind you, his mother all the while Chilled in the cear, like a wind to Nor'ward; And up, like a weary yawn, with its pulleys Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis; And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies, The Lady's face stopped its play, As if her first hair had grown grey—For such things must begin some one day!

VII.

In a day or two she was well again; As who should say, "You labour in vain! "This is all a jest against God, who meant "I should ever be, as I am, content "And glad in his sight; therefore, glad I will be!" So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII.

She was active, stirring, all fire— Could not rest, could not tire— To a stone she had given life! (I myself loved once, in my day,) -For a Shepherd's, Miner's, Huntsman's wife, (I had a wife, I know what I say,) Never in all the world such an one And here was plenty to be done, And she that could do it, great or small, She was to do nothing at all. There was already this man in his post, This in his station, and that in his office, And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most, To meet his eye, with the other trophies, Now outside the Hall, now in it, To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen, · At the proper place in the proper minute, And die away the life between. And it was amusing enough, each infraction Of rule (but for after-sadness that came)— To hear the consummate self-satisfaction With which the young Duke and the old Dame Would let her advise, and criticise, And, being a fool, instruct the wise, And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame They bore it all in complacent guise, As tho' an artificer, after contriving A wheel-work image as if it were living,

Should find with delight it could motion to strike him? So found the Duke, and his mother like him,—
The Lady hardly got a rebuff—
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX.

So, the little Lady grew silent and thin,
Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin;
And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,
And said in his heart, "'Tis done to spite me,
"But I shall find in my power to right me!"
Don't swear, friend—the Old One, many a year,
Is in Hell, and the Duke's self... you shall hear.

x.

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning, When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning. A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice, Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold, And another and another, and faster and faster. Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled: Then it so chanced that the Duke our master Asked himself what were the pleasures in season. And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty, He should do the Middle Age no treason In resolving on a huuting-party. Always provided, old books showed the way of it! What meant old poets by their strictures? And when old poets had said their say of it, How taught old painters in their pictures? We must revert to the proper channels, Workings in tapestry, paintings on pannels, And gather up Woodcraft's authentic traditions: Here was food for our various ambitions, As on each case, exactly stated, -To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup, Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting your stirrup— We of the household took thought and debated. Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin His sire was wont to do forest-work in; Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs" And "ahs" while he tugged on his grandsire's trunkhose; What signified hats if they had no rims on,

Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on 't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers, and Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length, and not murderers,
And oh, the Duke's tailor—he had a hot time on 't!

XI.

Now you must know, that when the first dizziness Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jackboots subsided, The Duke put this question, "The Duke's part provided, "Had not the Duchess some share in the business?" For out of the mouth of two or hree witnesses. Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses: And, after much laying of heads together, Somebody's cap got a notable feather By the announcement with proper unction That he had discovered the lady's function; Since ancient authors held this tenet, "When horns wind a mort and the deer it at siege, "Let the dame of the Castle prick forth on her jennet, "And with water to wash the hands of her liege "In a clean ewer with a fair towelling, "Let her preside at the disembowelling." Now, my friend, if you had so little religion As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner, And thrust her broad wings like a banner Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon; And if day by day, and week by week, You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes, And clipped her wings, and tied her beak, Would it cause you any great surprise If when you decided to give her an airing You found she needed a little preparing? -I say, should you be such a curmudgeon, If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon? Yet when the Duke to his Lady signified, Just a day before, as he judged most dignified, In what a pleasure she was to participate,— And, instead of leaping wide in flashes, Her eyes just lifted their long lashes, As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate, And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought. But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught, Of the weight by day and the watch by night, And much wrong now that used to be right,

DRAMATIC LYRICS.

So, thanking him, declined the hunting,— Was conduct ever more affronting? With all the ceremony settled— With the towel ready, and the sewer Polishing up his oldest ewer, And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald, Black-barred, creamed-coated and pink eye-ball'd,-No wonder if the Duke was nettled! And when she persisted nevertheless.— Well, I suppose, here's the time to confess That there ran half round our Lady's chamber A balcony none of the hardest to clamber; And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting, Stayed in call outside, what need of relating? And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent Adorer of Jacynth, of course, was your servant; And if she had the habit to peep through the casement, How could I keep at any vast distance? And so, as I say, on the Lady's persistence, The Duke, dumb-stricken with amazement, Stood for a while in a sultry smother, And then, with a smile that partook of the awful, furned her over to his yellow mother To learn what was decorous and lawful; And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct, As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct— Oh, but the Lady heard the whole truth at once! What meant she?—Who was she?—Her duty and station, The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once, Its decent regard and its fitting relation— In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free And turn them out to carouse in a belfry, And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon, And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on! Well, somehow or other it ended at last And, licking her whiskers, out she passed; And after her,—making (he hoped) a face Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin, Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace Of ancient here or modern paladin,— From door to staircase—oh, such a solemn Unbending of the vertebral column!

XII.

However, at sunrise our company mustered, And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel, And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered, With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel; For the court-yard's four walls were filled with fog You might cut as an axe chops a log. Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness; And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness, Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily, And a sinking at the lower abdomen Begins the day with indifferent omen: And lo, as he looked around uneasily, The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder This way and that from the valley under; And, looking thro' the court-yard arch, Down in the valley, what should meet him But a troop of Gypsics on their march, No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

XIII.

Now, in your land, Gypsies reach you, only After reaching all lands beside; North they go, south they go, trooping or lonely, And still, as they travel far and wide, Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there, That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there: But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground, And nowhere else, I take it, are found With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned; Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on The very fruit they are meant to feed on: For the earth—not a use to which they don't turn it, The ore that grows in the mountain's womb, Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb. They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it— Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle With side-bars never a brute can baffle; Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards; Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve inwards, Horseshoes they 'll hammer which turn on a swivel And won't allow the hoof to shrivel; Then they cast bells like the shell of a winkle, That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle: But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters; Commend me to Gypsy glass-makers and potters! Glasses they 'll blow you, crystal-clear, Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear, As if in pure water you dropped and let die A bruised black-blooded mulberry; And that other sort, their crowning pride, With long white threads distinct inside, Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle

Loose such a length and never tangle. Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters, And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters Such are the works they put their hand to, And the uses they turn and twist iron and sand to And these made the troop which our Duke saw sally Towards his castle from out of the valley, Men and women, like new-hatched spiders, Come out with the morning to greet our riders; And up they wound till they reached the ditch, Whereat all stopped save one, a witch, That I knew, as she hobbled from the group, By her gait, directly, and her stoop, I, whom Jacynth was used to importune To let that same witch tell us our fortune. The oldest Gypsy then above ground; And, so sure as the autumn season came round, She paid us a visit for profit or pastime, And every time, as she swore, for the last time. And presently she was seen to sidle Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle, So that the horse of a sudden reared up As under its nose the old witch peered up With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes, Of no use now but to gather brine, And began a kind of level whine, Such as they used to sing to their viols When their ditties they go grinding Up and down with nobody minding: And, then as of old, at the end of the hunming Her usual presents were forthcoming -A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles, (Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,) Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-end,— And so she awaited her annual stipend. But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe A word in reply; and in vain she felt With twitching fingers at her belt For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt, Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe,— Till, either to quicken his apprehension, Or possibly with an after-intention, She was come, she said, to pay her duty To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty. No sooner had she named his Lady, Than a shine lit up the face so shady, And its smirk returned with a novel meaning-For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning;

If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow, She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow: And who so fit a teacher of trouble As this sordid crosse bent well-nigh double? So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture, (If such it was, for they grow so hirsute That their own fleece serves for natural fur suit) He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his gesture, The life of the Lady, so flower-like and delicate, With the loathsome squalor of this helicat. I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned From out of the throng, and while I drew near He told the crone, as I since have reckoned By the way he bent and spoke into her ear With circumspection and mystery, The main of the Lady's history, Her frowardness and ingratitude; And for all the crone's submissive attitude I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening, And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening, As the 'she engaged with hearty good will Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil, And promised the Lady a thorough frightening. And so, just giving her a glimpse Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw, He bade me take the Gypsy mother And set her telling some story or other Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw, To while away a weary hour For the Lady left alone in her bower, Whose mind and body craved exertion And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV.

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curvetter, Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor, And back I turned and bade the crone follow. And what makes me confident what 's to be told you, Had all along been of this crone's devising, Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you, There was a novelty quick as surprising: For, first, she had shot up a full head in stature, And her step kept pace with mine nor faultered, As if age had foregone its usurpature, And the ignoble mien was wholly altered, And the face looked quite another nature,

And the change reached too, whatever the change meant, Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement, For where its tatters hung loose like sedges, Gold coins were glittering on the edges, Like the band-roll strung with tomans Which proves the veil a Persian woman's: And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly Come out as after the rain he paces, Two unmistakeable eye-points duly Live and aware looked out of their places. So we went and found Jacynth at the entry Of the Lady's chamber standing sentry; I told the command and produced my companion, And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one, For since last night, by the same token, Not a single word had the Lady spoken: So they went in both to the presence together, While I in the balcony watched the weather.

XV.

And now, what took place at the very first of all, I cannot tell, as I never could learn it: Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall On that little head of hers and burn it, If she knew how she came to drop so soundly Asleep of a sudden and there continue The whole time sleeping as profoundly As one of the boars my father would pin you 'Twixt the eyes where the life holds garrison, —Jacynth forgive me the comparison! But where I begin my own narration Is a little after I took my station To breathe the fresh air from the balcony, And, having in those days a falcon eye, To follow the hunt thro' the open country, From where the bushes thinlier crested The hillocks, to a plain where 's not one tree:-When, in a moment, my ear was arrested By—was it singing, or was it saying, Or a strange musical instrument playing In the chamber ?—and, to be certain, I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain, And there lay Jacynth asleep, Yet as if a watch she tried to keep, In a rosy sleep along the floor, With her head against the door; While in the midst, on the seat of state, Like a queen the Gypsy woman sate,

With head and face downbent On the Lady's head and face intent. For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease, The Lady sate between her knees, And o'er them the Lady's clasped hands met, And on those hands her chin was set, And her upturned face met the face of the crone Wherein the eyes had grown and grown As if she could double and quadruple At pleasure the play of either pupil -Very like by her hands slow fanning, As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers They moved to measure like bell clappers -I said, is it blessing, is it banning, Do they applaud you or burlesque you? Those hands and fingers with no flesh on? When, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue, At once I was stopped by the Lady's expression: For it was life her eyes were drinking From the crone's wide pair above unwinking, Life's pure fire received without shrinking, Into the heart and breast whose heaving Told you no single drop they were leaving— Life, that, filling her, passed redundant Into her very hair, back swerving Over each shoulder, loose and abundant, As her head thrown back showed the white throat curving, And the very tresses shared in the pleasure, Moving to the mystic measure, Bounding as the bosom bounded. I stopped short, more and more confounded, As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened, As she listened and she listened,— When all at once a hand detained me, And the self-same contagion gained me, And I kept time to the wondrous chime, Making out words and prose and rhyme, Till it seemed that the music furled Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped From under the words it first had propped, And left them midway in the world, And word took word as hand takes hand, I could hear at last, and understand, And when I held the unbroken thread, The Gypsy said:—

"And so at last we find my tribe And so I set thee in the midst,

And to one and all of them describe What thou saidst and what thou didst, Our long and terrible journey thro', And all thou art ready to say and do In the trials that remain: I trace them the vein and the other vein That meet on thy brow and part again, Making our rapid mystic mark; And I bid my people prove and probe Each eye's profound and glorious globe Till they detect the kindred spark In those depths so dear and dark. Like the spots that snap, and burst, and flee. Circling over the midnight sea. And on that young round cheek of thine I make them recognise the tinge, As when of the costly scarlet wine They drip so much as will impinge And spread in a thinnest scale affoat One thick gold drop from the olive's coat Over a silver plate whose sheen Still thro' the mixture shall be seen. For, so I prove thee, to one and all, Fit, when my people one their breast, To see the sign, and hear the call, And take the vow, and stand the test Which adds one more child to the rest— When the breast is bare and the arms are wide And the world is left outside. For there is probation to decree, And many and long must the trials be Thou shalt victoriously endure, If that brow is true and those eyes are sure; Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb,— Let once the vindicating ray Leap out amid the anxious gloom, And steel and fire have done their part And the prize falls on its finder's heart; So, trial after trial past, Wilt thou fall at the very last Breathless, half in trance With the thrill of the great deliverance, Into our arms for evermore; And thou shalt know, those arms once curled About thee, what we knew before, How love is the only good in the world. Henceforth be loved as heart can love,

DRAMATIC LYRICS.

Or brain devise, or hand approve! Stand up, look below, It is our life at thy feet we throw To step with into light and joy; Not a power of life but we'll employ To satisfy thy nature's want: Art thou the tree that props the plant, Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree— Canst thou help us, must we help thee? If any two creatures grew into one, They would do more than the world has done; Tho' each apart were never so weak, Yet vainly thro' the world should ye seek For the knowledge and the might Which in such union grew their right: So, to approach, at least, that end, And blend,—as much as may be, blend Thee with us or us with thee, As climbing-plant or propping-tree, Shall some one deck thee, over and down, Up and about, with blossoms and leaves? Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland crown, Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves, Die on thy boughs and disappear While not a leaf of thine is sere? Or is the other fate in store, And art thou fitted to adore. To give thy wondrous self away, And take a stronger nature's sway? I foresee and I could foretell Thy future portion; sure and well— But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true, And let them say what thou shalt do! Only, be sure thy daily life, In its peace, or in its strife, Never shall be unobserved: We pursue thy whole career, And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,— Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved, We are beside thee, in all thy ways, With our blame, with our praise, Our shame to feel, our pride te show, Glad, sorry—but indifferent, no! Whether it is thy lot to go, For the good of us all, where the haters meet In the crowded city's horrible street; Or thou step alone thro' the morass Where never sound yet was

Save the dry quick elap of the stork's bill, For the air is still, and the water still, When the blue breast of the dipping coot Dives under, and all again is mute. So at the last shall come old age, Decrepit as befits that stage: How else wouldst thou retire apart With the hoarded memories of thy heart, And gather all to the very least Of the fragments of life's earlier feast, Let fall through eagerness to find The crowning dainties yet behind? Ponder on the entire past Laid together thus at last, When the twilight helps to fuse The first fresh, with the faded hues, And the outline of the whole. As round eve's shades their framework roll. Grandly fronts for once thy soul: And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam Of yet another morning breaks, And like the hand which ends a dream, Death, with the might of his sunbeam, Touches the flesh and the soul awakes, Then-"

Ay, then, indeed, something would happen! But what? For here her voice changed like a bird's; There grew more of the music and less of the words; Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen To paper and put you down every syllable, With those clever clerkly fingers, All that I've forgotten as well as what lingers In this old brain of mine that 's but ill able To give you even this poor version Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering —More fault of those who had the hammering Of prosody into me and syntax, And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks! But to return from this excursion,— Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest, The peace most deep and the charm completest, There came, shall I say, a snap— And the charm vanished! And my sense returned, so strangely banished, And, starting as from a nap, I knew the crone was bewitching my Lady, With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring made I, Down from the casement, round to the portal,

Another minute and I had entered. When the door opened, and more than mortal Stood, with a face where to my mind centred All beauties I ever saw or shall see. The Duchess—I stopped as if struck by palsy. She was so different, happy and beautiful, I felt at once that all was best. And that I had nothing to do, for the rest, But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful. Not that, in fact, there was any commanding, -I saw the glory of her eye, And the brow's height and the breast's expanding And I was hers to live or to die. As for finding what she wanted. You know God Almighty granted Such little signs should serve his wild creatures To tell one another all their desires, So that each knows what its friend requires, And does its bidding without teachers. I preceded her: the crone Followed silent and alone; I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered In the old style; both her eyes had slunk Back to their pits; her stature shrunk; In short, the soul in its body sunk Like a blade sent home to its scabbard. We descended, I preceding; Crossed the court with nobody heeding: All the world was at the chase, The court-yard like a desert-place, The stable emptied of its small fry; I saddled myself the very palfrey I remember patting while it carried her, The day she arrived and the Duke married her. And, do you know, though it 's easy deceiving Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing The Lady had not forgotten it either, And knew the poor devil so much beneath her Would have been only too glad for her service To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise, But unable to pay proper duty where owing it Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it: For though the moment I began setting His saddle on my own nag of Borold's begetting, (Not that I meant to be obtrusive) She stopped me, while his rug was shifting, By a single rapid finger's lifting, And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,

And a little shake of the head, refused me,— I say, although she never used me, Yet when she was mounted, the Gypsy behind her. And I ventured to remind her, I suppose with a voice of less steadiness Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me, —Something to the effect that I was in readiness Whenever God should please she needed me,— Then, do you know, her face looked down on me With a look that placed a crown on me, And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom,— And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom, Dropped me—ah, had it been a purse Of silver, my friend, or gold, that 's worse, Why, you see, as soon as I found myself So understood,—that a true heart so may gain Such a reward,—I should have gone home again. Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself! It was a little plait of hair Such as friends in a convent make To wear, each for the other's sake,— This, see, which at my breast I wear, Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgment), And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment. And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this is idle, These are feelings it is not good to foster,-I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle, And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost her!

XVI.

When the liquor 's out, why, clink the cannakin? I did think to describe you the panic in The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin. And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness, How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib, When she heard, what she called, the flight of the feloness-But it seems such child's play What they said and did with the Lady away! And to dance on, when we've lost the music, Always made me—and no doubt makes you—sick. Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern As that sweet form disappeared thro' the postern, She that kept it in constant good humour, It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do more. But the world thought otherwise and went on, And my head's one that its spite was spent on:

Thirty years are fled since that morning, And with them all my head's adorning. Nor did the old Duchess die outright, As you expect, of suppressed spite, The natural end of every adder Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder: But she and her son agreed, I take it, That no one should touch on the story to wake it, For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery, So they made no search and small inquiry— And when fresh Gypsies have paid us a visit, I 've Noticed the couple were never inquisitive, But told them they 're folks the Duke don't want here, And bade them make haste and cross the frontier. Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it, And the old one was in the young one's stead, And took, in her place, the household's head, And a blessed time the household had of it! And were I not, as a man may say, cautious How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous, I could favour you with sundry touches Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness (To get on faster) until at last her Cheek grew to be one master-plaster Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse, Till in short she grew, from scalp to udder, Just the object to make you shudder!

XVII.

You 're my friend-What a thing friendship is, world without end! How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up, As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet, And poured out all levelily, sparkling, and sunlit, Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup, Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids-Friendship's as good as that monarch of fluids To supple a dry brain, fill you its ins-and-outs,— Gives your Life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand doubts Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease! I have seen my little Lady once more, Jacynth, the Gypsy, Berold, and the rest of it, For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before; I always wanted to make a clean breast of it, And now it is made - why, my heart's-blood, that went trickle, Trickle, but anon, in such muddy dribblets.

Is pumped up brisk now, thro' the main ventricle, And genially floats me about the giblets! I 'll tell you what I intend to do: I must see this fellow his sad life thro' —He is our Duke after all. And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall; My father was born here and I inherit His fame, a chain he bound his son with.— Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it, But there's no mine to blow up and get done with, So I must stay till the end of the chapter: For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter, Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on. One day or other, his head in a morion, And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick up, Slain by some onslaught fierce of hiccup. And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust, And its leathern sheath lies o'ergrown with a blue crust, Then, I shall scrape together my earnings; For, you see, in the Churchyard Jacynth reposes, And our children all went the way of the roses-It's a long lane that knows no turnings— One needs but little tackle to travel in, So, just one stout cloak shall I indue, And for a staff, what beats the javelin With which his boars my father pinned you? And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently, Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinful, I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly? Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful. What 's a man's age? He must hurry more, that 's all; Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold; When we mind labour, then only, we're too old-What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul? And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees, (Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil) I shall get safely out of the turmoil And arrive one day at the land of the Gypsies And find my Lady, or hear the last news of her From some old thief and son of Lucifer, His forchead chapleted green with wreathy hop, Sunburned all over like an Æthiop: And when my Cotnar begins to operate, And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate, And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaceid dent, I shall drop in with—as if by accident— "You never knew, then, how it all ended, "What fortunes good or bad attended

"The little Lady your Queen befriended?" -And when that 's told me, what 's remaining? This world 's too hard for my explaining— The same wise judge of matters equine Who still preferred some slim four-year-old To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold, And for strong Cotnar drank French weak wine, He also must be such a Lady's scorner! Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau, Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw! -So, I shall find out some snug corner Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight. Turn myself round and bid the world good night; And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen) To a world where 's to be no further throwing Pearls before swine that can't value them. An al

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES.

FAME.

See, as the prettiest graves will do in time. Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime: Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods Have struggled thro' its binding osier-rods; Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry, Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by; How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er plate, Have softened down the crisp-cut name and cate!

LOVE.

So, the year's done with!

(Love me for ever!)

All March begun with!

April's endeavour;

May-wreaths that bound me

June needs must sever!

Now snows falls round me,

Quenching June's fever—

(Love me for ever!)

SONG.

T.

Nay, but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall!

II.

Because you spend your lives in praising;
To praise, you search the wide world over;
So, why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her?
Above this tress, and this I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL.

Morning, evening, noon, and night, "Praise God," sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned, By which the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well; O'er his work the boy's curls fell:

But ever, at each period, He stopped and sang, "Praise God."

Then back again his curls he threw, And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well done; "I doubt not thou art heard, my son:

DRAMATIC LYRICS.

" As well as if thy voice to-day

"Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

"This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome

"Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, "Would God that I "Might praise Him, that great way, and die!"

Night passed, day shone, And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway, A thousand years are but a day.

God said in Heaven, "Nor day nor night "Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth, Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered in flesh the empty cell, Lived there, and played the craftsman well:

And morning, evening, noon, and night, Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy to youth he grew: The man put off the stripling's hue:

The man matured and fell away Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent, And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear; "There is no doubt in it, no fear:

"So sing old worlds, and so

"New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways:

"I miss my little human praise."

The flesh disguise, remained the cell,

'Twas Easter Day: he flew to Rome, And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight, Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:

And all his past career Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade, Till on his life the sickness weighed;

And in his cell, when death drew near, An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned, And on his sight the angel burned.

- "I bore thee from thy craftman's cell, "And set thee here; I did not well.
- "Vainly I left my angel's-sphere, "Vain was thy dream of many a year.
- "Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it dropped-

"Creation's chorus stopped!

- "Go back and praise again
- "The early way—while I remain.
- "With that weak voice of our disdain, "Take up Creation's pausing strain.
- "Back to the cell and poor employ: "Become the craftsman and the boy!"

Theocrite grew old at home; A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died: They sought God side by side.

MEETING AT NIGHT.

ı.

The grey sea and the long black land; And the yellow half-moon large and low; And the startled little waves that leap In fiery ringlets from their sleep, As I gain the cove with pushing prow, And quench its speed in the slushy sand.

TT.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach; Three fields to cross till a farm appears; A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch And biue spurt of a lighted match, And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears, Than the two hearts beating each to each!

PARTING AT MORNING.

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea, And the sun looked over the mountain's rim— And straight was a path of gold for him, And the need of a world of men for me.

SAUL.

SAID Abner, "At last thou art come
"Ere I tell, ere thou speak,—
"Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it
And did kiss his cheek:
And he, "Since the King, oh, my friend,
"For thy countenance sent,
Nor drunken nor eaten have we;
Nor, until from his tent
Thou return with the joyful assurance
The King liveth yet,
Shall our lip with the honey be brightened,

—The water, be wet.

For out of the black mid-tent's silence, A space of three days, No sound hath escaped to thy servants, *Of prayer nor of praise, To betoken that Saul and the Spirit Have ended their strife, And that faint in his triumph the monarch

Sinks back upon life.

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved i God's child, with his dew On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies Still living and blue As thou brak'st them to twine round thy harp-strings, As if no wild heat

Were raging to torture the desert!" Then I, as was meet,

Knelt down to the God of my fathers, And rose on my feet,

And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;

I pulled up the spear that obstructed, And under I stooped;

Hands and knees o'er the slippery grass-patch— All withered and gone-

That leads to the second enclosure, I groped my way on,

Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open; Then once more I prayed,

And opened the foldskirts and entered, And was not afraid;

And spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice replied;

And first I saw nought but the blackness; But soon I descried

A something more black than the blackness -The vast, the upright

Main-prop which sustains the pavilion,— And slow into sight

Grew a figure, gigantic, against it, And blackest of all;—

Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof, Showed Saul.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop; Both arms stretched out wide On the great cross-support in the centre

That goes to each side:

So he bent not a muscle, but hung there As, caught in his pangs

And waiting his change, the king-serpent All heavily hangs,

Far away from his kind, in the pine, Till deliverance come

With the Spring-time,—so agonized Saul, Drear and stark, blind and dumb.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies We twine round its chords

Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide
—Those sunbeams like swords!

And I first played the tune all our sheep know, As, one after one,

So docile they come to the pen-door

Till folding be done;

—They are white and untorn by the bushes,
For lo, they have fed

Where the long grasses stifle the water Within the stream's bed:

How one after one seeks its lodging,

As star follows star

Into eve and the blue far above us,

—So blue and so far!

Then the tune for which quails on the cornland Will leave each his mate

To follow the player; then, what makes The crickets elate

Till for boldness they fight one another:
And then, what has weight

To set the quick jerboa a-musing Outside his sand house

—There are none such as he for a wonder— Half bird and half mouse!

—God made all the creatures and gave them Our love and our fear,

To show, we and they are his children, One family here.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, Their wine-song, when hand

Grasps hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, And great hearts expand,

And grow one in the sense of this world's life;
And then, the low song

When the dead man is praised on his journey—
"Bear, bear him along

"With his few faults shut up like dead flowrets;
"Are balm-seeds not here

"To console us? The land is left none such "As he on the bier—

"Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!"
And then, the glad chaunt

Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, Next, she whom we vaunt

As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling:

And then, the great march

When man runs to man to assist him,

And buttress an arch

Nought can break . . who shall harm them, our friends?

Then, the chorus intoned

As the Levites go up to the altar In glory enthroned—

But I stopped here—for here, in the darkness, Saul groaned.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence!
And listened apart;

And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered,—And sparkles 'gan dart

From the jewels that woke in his turban

—At once with a start

All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies Courageous at heart;

So the head—but the body still moved not, Still hung there erect.

And I bent once again to my playing, Pursued it unchecked,

As I sang, "Oh, our manhood's prime vigour!
—No spirit feels waste,

No muscle is stopped in its playing,

No sinew unbraced;—

And the wild joys of living! The leaping From rock up to rock—

The rending their boughs from the palm-trees,—
The cool silver shock

Of a plunge in the pool's living water—

The haunt of the bear,

And the sultriness showing the lion Is couched in his lair:

And the meal—the rich dates—yellowed over With gold dust divine,

And the locust's flesh steeped in the pitcher, The full draught of wine,

And the sleep in the dried river channel

Where tall rushes tell

The water was wont to go warbling

So softly and well,—

How good is man's life here, mere living! How fit to employ

The heart and the soul and the senses For ever in joy!

Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father Whose sword thou didst guard

When he trusted thee forth to the wolf hunt For glorious reward?

Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother Held up, as men sung

The song of the nearly-departed, And heard her faint tongue

Joining in while it could to the witness

"Let one more attest,

"I have lived, seen God's hand thro' that life-time, "And all was for best. . ."

Then they sung thro' their tears, in strong triumph, Not much,—but the rest!

And thy brothers—the help and the contest, The working whence grew

Such result, as from seething grape-bundles The spirit so true:

And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood With wonder and hope,

Present promise, and wealth in the future,— The eye's eagle scope,—

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch,
A people is thine!

Of all gifts the world offers singly,

On one head combine,

On one head the joy and the pride, Even rage like the throe

That opes the rock, helps its glad labour,

And lets the gold go—

And ambition that sees a sun lead it— Oh, all of these—all

Combine to unite in one creature
—Saul!

END OF PART THE FIRST.

TIME'S REVENGES.

I've a Friend, over the sea; I like him, but he loves me; It all grew out of the books I write; They find such favour in his sight That he slaughters you with savage looks Because you don't admire my books: He does himself though,—and if some vein Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain, To-morrow month, if I lived to try, Round should I just turn quietly, Or out of the bed-clothes stretch my hand Till I found him, come from his foreign land To be my nurse in this poor place, And make me broth and wash my face, And light my fire, and, all the while, Bear with his old good-humoured smile That I told him, "Better have kept away "Than come and kill me, night and day, "With worse than fever's throbs and shoots, "At the creaking of his clumsy boots." I am as sure that this he would do, As that Saint Paul's is striking Two: And I think I had rather . . woe is me! -Yes, rather see him than not see, If lifting a hand would seat him there Before me in the empty chair To-night, when my head aches indeed, And I can neither think, nor read, And these blue fingers will not hold The pen; this garret's freezing cold!

And I've a Lady—There he wakes,
The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
Within me, at her name, to pray
Fate send some creature in the way
Of my love for her, to be down-torn,
Upthrust and onward borne,
So I might prove myself that sea
Of passion which I needs must be!
Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint
And my style infirm, and its figures faint,

All the critics say, and more blame yet, And not one angry word you get! But please you, wonder I would put My cheek beneath that Lady's foot Rather than trample under mine The laurels of the Florentine, And you shall see how the Devil spends A fire God gave for other ends! I tell you, I stride up and down This garret, crowned with love's best crown, And feasted with love's perfect feast, To think I kill for her, at least, Body and soul and peace and fame, Alike youth's end and manhood's aim —So is my spirit, as flesh with sin, Filled full, eaten out and in With the face of her, the eyes of her, The lips and little chin, the stir Of shadow round her mouth; and she —I'll tell you,—calmly would decree That I should roast at a slow fire, If that would compass her desire And make her one whom they invite To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be Heaven; there must be Hell; Meantime, there is our Earth here—well

THE GLOVE.

(Peter Ronsard loquitur.)

- "Hевсно!" yawned one day King Francis,
- "Distance all value enhances!
- "When a man's busy, why, leisure
- "Strikes him as wonderful pleasure,—
 "'Faith, and at leisure once is he.
- "Straightway he wants to be busy.
- "Here we've got peace; and aghast I'm
- "Caught thinking war the true pastime!
- "Is there a reason in metre?
- "Give us your speech, Master Peter!" I who, if mortal dare say so,
- Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,
- "Sire," I replied, "joys prove cloudlets:

'Men are the merest Ixions"—
Here the King whistled aloud, "Let's
". . Heigho . . go look at our lions!"
Such are the sorrowful chances
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the court-yard proceeding, Our company, Francis was leading, Increased by new followers tenfold Before he arrived at the penfold; Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen At sunset the western horizon. And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost With the dame he professed to adore most— Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed Her, and the horrible pitside; For the penfold surrounded a hollow Which led where the eye scarce dared follow. And shelved to the chamber secluded Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded. The King hailed his keeper, an Arab As glossy and black as a scarab, And bade him make sport and at once stir Up and out of his den the old monster. They opened a hole in the wire-work Across it, and dropped there a firework, And fled; one's heart's beating redoubled; A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled, The blackness and silence so utter, By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter; Then earth in a sudden contortion Gave out to our gaze her abortion! Such a brute! Were I friend Clement Marot (Whose experience of nature's but narrow. And whose faculties move in no small mist When he versifies David the Psalmist) I should study that brute to describe you Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu! One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy To see the black mane, vast and heapy, The tail in the air stiff and straining, The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning, As over the barrier which bounded His platform, and us who surrounded The barrier, they reached and they rested On the space that might stand him in best stead: For who knew, he thought, what the amazement The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,

And if, in this minute of wonder, No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder, Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered, The lion at last was delivered? Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead! And you saw by the flash on his forehead, By the hope in those eyes wide and steady, He was leagues in the desert already, Driving the flocks up the mountain, Or catlike couched hard by the fountain To waylay the date-gathering negress: So guarded he entrance or egress. "How he stands!" quoth the King: "we may well swear, "No novice, we 've won our spurs elsewhere, "And so can afford the confession, "We exercise wholesome discretion "In keeping aloof from his threshold; "Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,

"The visitor's brisket or surloin:
"But who's he would prove so fool-hardy?
"Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!"

"Their first would too pleasantly purloin

The sentence no sooner was uttered, Than over the rails a glove fluttered, Fell close to the lion, and rested: The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested With life so, De Lorge had been wooing For months past; he sate there pursuing His suit, weighing out with nonchalance Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tarrier! De Lorge made one leap at the barrier, Walked straight to the glove,—while the lion Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire. And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—Picked it up, and as calmly retreated, Leaped back where the lady was seated, And full in the face of its owner Flung the glove—

"Your heart's queen, you dethrone her? "So should I"—eried the King—"'twas mere vanity, "Not love, set that task to humanity!" Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I; for I caught an expression In her brow's undisturbed self-possession Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,— As if from no pleasing experiment She rose, yet of pain not much heedful So long as the process was needful— And if she had tried in a crucible, To what "speeches like gold" were reducible, And, finding the finest prove copper, Felt the smoke in her face was but proper; To know what she had not to trust to, Was worth all the ashes, and dust too. She went out 'mid hooting and laughter; Clement Marot stayed; I followed after, And asked, as a grace, what it all meant-If she wished not the rash deed's recallment? "For I"—so I spoke—"am a Poet:

"Human nature,—behoves that I know it!"

She told me, "Too long had I heard

"Of the deed proved alone by the word:

"For my love,—what De Lorge would not dare! "With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare.

"And the endless descriptions of death

- "He would brave when my lip formed a breath, "I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
- "Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce,

"For such gifts as no lady could spurn,

"Must offer my love in return.

"When I looked on your lion, it brought "All the dangers at once to my thought,

"Encountered by all sorts of men, "Before he was lodged in his den,—

- "From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
- "Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands, "With no King and no Court to applaud,
- "By no shame, should he shrink, overawed, "Yet to capture the creature made shift,
- "That his rude boys might laugh at the gift, "To the page who last leaped o'er the fence

"Of the pit, on no greater pretence

"Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
"Lest his pay for a week should be stopped—

"So, wiser I judged it to make

"One trial what 'death for my sake'
"Really meant, while the power was yet mine.

"Than to wait until time should define

DRAMATIC LYRICS.

"Such a phrase not so simply as I,
"Who took it to mean just 'to die.'
"The blow a glove gives is but weak—
"Does the mark yet discolour my cheek?
"But when the heart suffers a blow,
"Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway:
No doubt that a noble should more weigh
His life than befits a plebeian;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean—
(I judge by a certain calm fervour
The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
—He'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn
If you whispered "Friend, what you'd get, first earn!"
And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they married,
To that marriage some happiness, maugre
The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie, Those in wonder and praise, these in envy: And in short stood so plain a head taller That he wooed and won . . How do you call her? The beauty, that rose in the sequel To the King's love, who loved her a week well; And 'twas noticed he never would honour De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her) With the easy commission of stretching His legs in the service, and fetching His wife, from her chamber, those straying Sad gloves she was always mislaying, While the King took the closet to chat in,— But of course this adventure came pat in: And never the King told the story, How bringing a glove brought such glory. But the wife smiled—"His nerves are grown firmer— "Mine he brings now and utters no murmur!"

Venienti occurrite morbo!
With which moral I drop my theorbo.

CLARET AND TOKAY.

Ι.

My heart sunk with our Claret-flask,
Just now, beneath the heavy sedges
That serve this pond's black face for mask;
And still at yonder broken edges
Of the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
After my heart I look and listen.

II.

Our laughing little flask, compell'd
Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady;
As when, both arms beside her held,
Feet straightened out, some gay French lady
Is caught up from Life's light and motion,
And dropped into Death's silent ocean!

Up jumped Tokay on our table, Like a pygmy castle-warder. Dwarfish to see, but stout and able, Arms and accoutrements all in order; And fierce he looked north, then, wheeling south, Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth, Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather, Twisted his thumb in his red moustache, Gingled his huge brass spurs together, Tightened his waist with its Buda sash, And then with an impudence nought could abash, Shrugged his hump-shoulder, To tell the beholder, For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the bolder, And so with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting, And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting, Went the little man from Ausbruch, strutting!

PAULINE:

& Fragment of a Confession.

Plus ne suis ce que j'ai éte, ne le scaurois jamais être. -MAROL

nun unoico, quin titulus libri nostri raritate suà quamplurimos afficiat ad legendum : inter quos nonnulli obliquæ opinionis, mente languidi, multi etiam maligni, et in ingenium nostrum ingrati accedent, qui temerariá suâ ignorantià, vix conspecto titulo clamabunt: Nos vetita docere, hæresium semina jacere: piis auribus offendiculo, præclaris ingeniis scandalo esse : . . . adeò conscientiæ suæ consulentes, ut nec Apollo, nec Musæ omnes, neque Angelus de cœlo me ab illorum execratione vindicare queant; quibus et ego nunc consulo, ne scripta nostra legant, nec intelligant, nec memincrint : nam noxia sunt, venenosa sunt: Acherontis ostium est in hoc libro, lapides loquitur, caveant, ne cerebrum illis excutiat. Vos autem, qui æqua mente ad legendum venitis, si tantam prudentiæ discretionem adhibueritis, quantam in melle legendo apes, jam securi legite. Puto namque vos et utilitatis haud parmm et voluptatis plurimum accepturos. Quod si qua repereritis, que vobis non placeant, mittite illa, nec utimini. NAM ET EGO VOBIS ILLA NON PROBO, SED NARRO. Cætera tamen propterea non respuite. . . . Ideo, si quid liberius dictum sit, ignoscite adolescentia nostra, qui minor quam adolescens hoc opus composui.—H. Cor. Agrippa, De Occult, Phil.

London, January, 1833.

V. A. XX.

PAULINE:

A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION.

Pauline, mine own, bend o'er me—thy soft breast Shall pant to mine—bend o'er me—thy sweet eyes. And loosened hair, and breathing lips, and arms Drawing me to thee—these build up a screen To shut me in with thee, and from all fear, So that I might unlock the sleepless brood Of fancies from my soul, their lurking place, Nor doubt that each would pass, ne'er to return To one so watched, so loved, and so secured. But what can guard thee but thy naked love? Ah, dearest! whoso sucks a poisoned wound Envenoms his own veins,—thou art so good, So calm—if thou should'st wear a brow less light For some wild thought which, but for me, were kept From out thy soul, as from a sacred star. Yet till I have unlocked them it were vain To hope to sing; some woe would light on me; Nature would point at one, whose quivering lip Was bathed in her enchantments—whose brow burned Beneath the crown, to which her secrets knelt; Who learned the spell which can call up the dead, And then departed, smiling like a fiend Who has deceived God. If such one should seek Again her altars, and stand robed and crowned Amid the faithful: sad confession first, Remorse and pardon, and old claims renewed, Ere I can be—as I shall be no more. I had been spared this shame, if I had sate By thee for ever, from the first, in place Of my wild dreams of beauty and of good, Or with them, as an earnest of their truth. No thought nor hope, having been shut from thee,

No vague wish unexplained—no wandering aim Sent back to bind on Fancy's wings, and seek Some strange fair world, where it might be a law; But doubting nothing, had been led by thee, Thro' youth, and saved, as one at length awaked, Who has slept thro' a peril. Ah! vain, vain!

Thou lovest me—the past is in its grave, Tho' its ghost haunts us—still this much is ours, To cast away restraint, lest a worse thing Wait for us in the darkness. Thou lovest me, And thou art to receive not love, but faith, For which thou wilt be mine, and smile, and take All shapes, and shames, and veil without a fear That form which music follows like a slave; And I look to thee, and I trust in thee, As in a Northern night one looks alway Unto the East for morn, and spring and jov. Thou seest then my aimless, hopeless state, And resting on some few old feelings, won Back by thy beauty, would'st that I essay The task, which was to me what now thou art: And why should I conceal one weakness more?

Thou wilt remember one warm morn, when Winter Crept aged from the earth, and Spring's first breath Blew soft from the moist hills—the black-thorn boughs, So dark in the bare wood; when glistening In the sunshine were white with coming buds, Like the bright side of a sorrow—and the banks Had violets opening from sleep like eyes-I walked with thee, who knew not a deep shame Lurked beneath smiles and careless words, which sought To hide it—till they wandered and were mute; As we stood listening on a sunny mound To the wind murmuring in the damp copse, Like heavy breathings of some hidden thing Betrayed by sleep—until the feeling rushed That I was low indeed, yet not so low As to endure the calmness of thine eyes; And so I told thee all, while the cool breast I leaned on altered not its quiet beating; And long ere words, like a hurt bird's complaint, Bade me look up and be what I had been, I felt despair could never live by thee. Thou wilt remember:—thou art not more dear Than song was once to me; and I ne'er sung But as one entering bright halls, where all

Will rise and shout for him. Sure I must own That I am fallen—having chosen gifts Distinct from theirs—that I am sad—and fain Would give up all to be but where I was; Not high as I had been, if faithful found—But low and weak, yet full of hope, and sure Of goodness as of life—that I would lose All this gay mastery of mind, to sit Once more with them, trusting in truth and love, And with an aim—not being what I am.

Oh, Pauline! I am ruined! who believed That tho' my soul had floated from its sphere Of wide dominion into the dim orb Of self—that it was strong and free as ever:— It has conformed itself to that dim orb, Reflecting all its shades and shapes, and now Must stay where it alone can be adored. I have felt this in dreams—in dreams in which I seemed the fate from which I fled; I felt A strange delight in causing my decay; I was a fiend, in darkness chained for ever Within some ocean-cave; and ages rolled, Till thro' the cleft rock, like a moonbeam, came A white swan to remain with me; and ages Rolled, yet I tired not of my first joy In gazing on the peace of its pure wings. And then I said, "It is most fair to me, "Yet its soft wings must sure have suffered change "From the thick darkness-sure its eyes are dim-"Its silver pinions must be cramped and numbed "With sleeping ages here; it cannot leave me, "For it would seem, in light, beside its kind, "Withered—tho' here to me most beautiful." And then I was a young witch, whose blue eyes, As she stood naked by the river springs, Drew down a god—I watched his radiant form Growing less radiant—and it gladdened me; Till one morn, as he sat in the sunshine Upon my knees, singing to me of heaven, He turned to look at me, ere I could lose The grin with which I viewed his perishing. And he shricked and departed, and sat long By his deserted throne—but sunk at last, Murmuring, as I kissed his lips and curled Around him, "I am still a god—to thee." Still I can lay my soul bare in its fall, For all the wandering and all the weakness

Will be a saddest comment on the song.

And if, that done, I can be young again,
I will give up all gained as willingly
As one gives up a charm which shuts him out
From hope, or part, or care, in human kind.
As life wanes, all its cares, and strife, and toil,
Seem strangely valueless, while the old trees
Which grew by our youth's home—the waving mass
Of climbing plants, heavy with bloom and dew—
The morning swallows with their songs like words,—
All these seem clear and only worth our thoughts.
So aught connected with my early life—
My rude songs or my wild imaginings,
How I look on them—most distinct amid
The fever and the stir of after years!

I ne'er had ventured e'en to hope for this, Had not the glow I felt at His award, Assured me all was not extinct within.

Him whom all honor—whose renown springs up Like sunlight which will visit all the world; So that e'en they who sneered at him at first, Come out to it, as some dark spider crawls From his foul nets, which some lit torch invades, Yet spinning still new films for his retreat.—Thou didst smile, poet,—but, can we forgive?

Sun-treader—life and light be thine for ever; Thou art gone from us—years go by—and spring Gladdens, and the young earth is beautiful, Yet thy songs come not—other bards arise, But none like thee—they stand—thy majesties, Like mighty works which tell some Spirit there Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn. Till, its long task completed, it hath risen And left us, never to return: and all Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain. The air seems bright with thy past presence yet, But thou art still for me, as thou hast been When I have stood with thee, as on a throne With all thy dim creations gathered round Like mountains,—and I felt of mould like them, And creatures of my own were mixed with them, Like things half-lived, catching and giving life. But thou art still for me, who have adored, Tho' single, panting but to hear thy name, Which I believed a spell to me alone, Scarce deeming thou wert as a star to menAs one should worship long a sacred spring Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which long grasses cross, And one small tree embowers droopingly, Joying to see some wandering insect won, To live in its few rushes—or some locust To pasture on its boughs—or some wild bird Stoop for its freshness from the trackless air, And then should find it but the fountain-head, Long lost, of some great river—washing towns And towers, and seeing old woods which will live But by its banks, untrod of human foot, Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering In light as some thing lieth half of life Before God's foot—waiting a wondrous change -Then girt with rocks which seek to turn or stay Its course in vain, for it does ever spread Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on, Being the pulse of some great country—so Wert thou to me—and art thou to the world. And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret, That I am not what I have been to thee: Like a girl one has loved long silently, In her first loveliness, in some retreat, When first emerged, all gaze and glow to view Her fresh eyes, and soft hair, and lips which bleed Like a mountain berry. Doubtless it is sweet To see her thus adored—but there have been Moments, when all the world was in his praise, Sweeter than all the pride of after hours. Yet, Sun-treader, all hail !- from my heart's heart I bid thee hail !—e'en in my wildest dreams, I am proud to feel I would have thrown up all The wreathes of fame which seemed o'erhanging me, To have seen thee, for a moment, as thou art.

And if thou livest—if thou lovest, spirit!
Remember me, who set this final seal
To wandering thought—that one so pure as thou
Could never die. Remember me, who flung
All honor from my soul—yet paused and said,
"There is one spark of love remaining yet,
"For I have nought in common with him—shapes
"Which followed him avoid me, and foul forms
"Seek me, which ne'er could fasten on his mind;
"And tho' I feel how low I am to him,
"Yet I aim not even to catch a tone
"Of all the harmonies he called up,
"So one gleam still remains, altho' the last."

Remember me—who praise thee e'en with tears, For never more shall I walk calm with thee; Thy sweet imaginings are as an air, A melody, some wond'rous singer sings, Which, though it haunt men oft in the still eve, They dream not to essay; yet it no less, But more is honored. I was thine in shame, And now when all thy proud renown is out, I am a watcher, whose eyes have grown dim With looking for some star—which breaks on him, Altered, and worn, and weak, and full of tears.

Autumn has come—like Spring returned to us, Won from her girlishness—like one returned A friend that was a lover—nor forgets The first warm love, but full of sober thoughts Of fading years; whose soft mouth quivers yet With the old smile—but yet so changed and still! And here am I the scoffer, who have probed Life's vanity, won by a word again Into my old life—for one little word Of this sweet friend, who lives in loving me, Lives strangely on my thoughts, and looks, and words, As fathoms down some nameless ocean thing Its silent course of quietness and joy. O dearest, if, indeed, I tell the past, May'st thou forget it as a sad sick dream; Or if it linger-my lost soul too soon Sinks to itself, and whispers, we shall be But closer linked—two creatures whom the earth Bears singly—with strange feelings, unrevealed But to each other; or two lonely things Created by some Power, whose reign is done, Having no part in God, or his bright world, I am to sing; whilst ebbing day dies soft, As a lean scholar dies, worn o'er l'is book, And in the heaven stars steal out one by one, As hunted men steal to their mountain watch. I must not think—lest this new impulse die In which I trust. I have no confidence, So I will sing on—fast as fancies come Rudely—the verse being as the mood it paints.

I strip my mind bare—whose first elements I shall unveil—not as they struggled forth In infancy nor as they now exist, That I am grown above them, and can rule them, But in that middle stage, when they were full,

Yet ere I had disposed them to my will: And then I shall show how these elements Produced my present state, and what it is. I am made up of an intensest life, Of a most clear idea of consciousness Of self—distinct from all its qualities, From all affections, passions, feelings, powers; And thus far it exists, if tracked in all. But linked in me, to self-supremacy, Existing as a centre to all things, Most potent to create, and rule, and call Upon all things to minister to it: And to a principle of restlessness Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all-This is myself; and I should thus have been. Though gifted lower than the meanest soul.

And of my powers, one springs up to save From utter death a soul with such desires Confined to clay—which is the only one Which marks me—an imagination which Has been an angel to me—coming not In fitful visions, but beside me ever, And never failing me; so tho' my mind Forgets not—not a shred of life forgets—Yet I can take a secret pride in calling The dark past up—to quell it regally.

A mind like this must dissipate itself, But I have always had one lode-star; now, As I look back, I see that I have wasted, Or progressed as I looked toward that star— A need, a trust, a yearning after God, A feeling I have analysed but late, But it existed, and was reconciled With a neglect of all I deemed his laws, Which yet, when seen in others, I abhorred. I felt as one beloved, and so shut in From fear—and thence I date my trust in signs And omens—for I saw God every where; And I can only lay it to the fruit Of a sad after-time that I could doubt Even his being—having always felt His presence—never acting from myself, Still trusting in a hand that leads me through All danger; and this feeling still has fought Against my weakest reason and resolves.

And I can love nothing—and this dull truth Has come the last—but sense supplies a love Encircling me and mingling with my life.

These make myself—I have sought in vain To trace how they were formed by circumstance, For I still find them—turning my wild youth Where they alone displayed themselves, converting All objects to their use—now see their course!

They came to me in my first dawn of life, Which passed alone with wisest ancient books, All halo-girt with fancies of my own, And I myself went with the tale—a god, Wandering after beauty—or a giant, Standing vast in the sunset—an old hunter, Talking with gods—or a high-crested chief, Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos;— I tell you, nought has ever been so clear As the place, the time, the fashion of those lives. I had not seen a work of lofty art, Nor woman's beauty, nor sweet nature's face, Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea: The deep groves, and white temples, and wet caves-And nothing ever will surprise me now— Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed, Who bound my forehead with Proscrpine's hair.

An' strange it is, that I who could so dream, Should e'er have stooped to aim at aught beneath—Aught low, or painful, but I never doubted; So as I grew, I rudely shaped my life To my immediate wants, yet strong beneath Was a vague sense of powers folded up—A sense that tho' those shadowy times were past, Their spirit dwelt in me, and I should rule.

Then came a pause, and long restraint chained down My soul, till it was changed. I lost myself, And were it not that I so loathe that time, I could recall how first I learned to turn My mind against itself; and the effects, In deeds for which remorse were vain, as for The wanderings of delirious dream; yet thence Came cunning, envy, falsehood, which so long Have spotted me—at length I was restored, Yet long the influence remained; and nought

But the still life I led, apart from all, Which left my soul to seek its old delights, Could e'er have brought me thus far back to peace. As peace returned, I sought out some pursuit: And song rose—no new impulse—but the one With which all others best could be combined. My life has not been that of those whose heaven Was lampless, save where poesy shone out; But as a clime, where glittering mountain-tops, And glancing sea, and forests steeped in light. Give back reflected the far-flashing sun; For music, (which is earnest of a heaven, Seeing we know emotions strange by it. Not else to be revealed,) is as a voice, A low voice calling Fancy, as a friend, To the green woods in the gay summer time. And she fills all the way with dancing shapes. Which have made painters pale; and they go on While stars look at them, and winds call to them, As they leave life's path for the twilight world, Where the dead gather. This was not at first For I scarce knew what I would do. I had No wish to paint, no yearning—but I sang.

And first I sang, as I in dream have seen, Music wait on a lyrist for some thought, Yet singing to herself until it came. I turned to those old times and scenes, where all That's beautiful had birth for me, and made Rude verses on them all; and then I paused— I had done nothing, so I sought to know What mind had yet achieved. No fear was mine As I gazed on the works of mighty bards, In the first joy at finding my own thoughts Recorded, and my powers exemplified, And feeling their aspirings were my own. And then I first explored passion and mind; And I began afresh; I rather sought To rival what I wondered at, than form Creations of my own; so much was light Lent back by others, yet much was my own.

I paused again—a change was coming on, I was no more a boy—the past was breaking Before the coming, and like fever worked. I first thought on myself—and here my powers Burst out. I dreamed not of restraint, but gazed On all things: schemes and systems went and came,

And I was proud (being vainest of the weak), In wandering o'er them, to seek out some one To be my own; as one should wander o'er The white way for α star.

On one, whom praise of mine would not offend, Who was as calm as beauty—being such Unto mankind as thou to me, Pauline, Believing in them, and devoting all His soul's strength to their winning back to peace; Who sent forth hopes and longings for their sake, Clothed in all passion's melodies, which first Caught me, and set me, as to a sweet task, To gather every breathing of his songs. And woven with them there were words, which seemed A key to a new world; the muttering Of angels, of some thing unguessed by man. How my heart beat, as I went on, and found Much there! I felt my own mind had conceived, But there living and burning; soon the whole Of his conceptions dawned on me; their praise Is in the tongues of men; men's brows are high When his name means a triumph and a pride; So my weak hands may well forbear to dim What then seemed my bright fate: I threw myself To meet it. I was vowed to liberty, Men were to be as gods, and earth as heaven. And I—ah! what a life was mine to be, My whole soul rose to meet it. Now, Pauline, I shall go mad, if I recall that time.

O let me look back, e'er I leave for ever The time, which was an hour, that one waits For a fair girl, that comes a withered hag. And I was lonely,—far from woods and fields, And amid dullest sights, who should be loose As a stag-yet I was full of joy-who lived With Plato—and who had the key to life. And I had dimly shaped my first attempt, And many a thought did I build up on thought, As the wild bee hangs cell to cell—in vain; For I must still go on: my mind rests not. 'Twas in my plan to look on real life, Which was all new to me; my theories Were firm, so I left them, to look upon Men, and their cares, and hopes, and fears, and joys And, as I pondered on them all, I sought

How best life's end might be attained—an end Comprising every joy. I deeply mused.

And suddenly, without heart-wreck, I awoke As from a dream—I said, 'twas beautiful, Yet but a dream; and so adieu to it. As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow Strange towers, and walled gardens, thick with trees, Where singing goes on, and delicious mirth, And laughing fairy creatures peeping over, And on the morrow, when he comes to live For ever by those springs, and trees, fruit-flushed And fairy bowers—all his search is vain. Well I remember . . . First went my hopes of perfecting mankind, And faith in them—then freedom in itself, And virtue in itself—and then my motives' ends. And powers and loves; and human love went last. I felt this no decay, because new powers Rose as old feelings left—wit, mockery, And happiness; for I had oft been sad, Mistrusting my resolves: but now I cast Hope joyously away—I laughed and said, "No more of this"—I must not think; at length I look'd again to see how all went on.

My powers were greater—as some temple seemed My soul, where nought is changed, and incense rolls Around the altar—only God is gone, And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat! So I passed through the temple; and to me Knelt troops of shadows; and they cried, "Hail, king. "We serve thee now and thou shalt serve no more! "Call on us, prove us, let us worship thee!" And I said, "Are ye strong—let fancy bear me "Far from the past."-And I was borne away As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind, O'er deserts, towers, and forests, I being calm; And I said, "I have nursed up energies, "They will prey on me." And a band knelt low, And cried, "Lord, we are here, and we will make "A way for thee—in thine appointed life "O look on us!" And I said, "Ye will worship "Me; but my heart must worship too." They shouted. "Thyself-thou art our king!" So I stood there Smiling * * * * * *

And buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit With which I looked out how to end my days; I felt once more myself—my powers were mine; I found that youth or health so lifted me, That, spite of all life's vanity, no grief Came nigh me—I must ever be light-hearted; And that this feeling was the only veil Betwixt me and despair: so if age came, I should be as a wreck linked to a soul Yet fluttering, or mind-broken, and aware Of my decay. So a long summer morn Found me; and e'er noon came, I had resolved No age should come on me, ere youth's hopes went, For I would wear myself out—like that morn Which wasted not a sunbeam—every joy I would make mine, and die; and thus I sought To chain my spirit down, which I had fed With thoughts of fame. I said, the troubled life Of genius seen so bright when working forth Some trusted end, seems sad, when all in vain— Most sad, when men have parted with all joy For their wild fancy's sake, which waited first, As an obedient spirit, when delight Came not with her alone, but alters soon, Coming darkened, seldom, hasting to depart, Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears.

But I shall never lose her; she will live Brighter for such seclusion—I but catch A hue, a glance of what I sing; so pain Is linked with pleasure, for I ne'er may tell The radiant sights which dazzle me; but now They shall be all my own, and let them fade Untold—others shall rise as fair, as fast. And when all's done, the few dim gleams transferred,-(For a new thought sprung up—that it were well To leave all shadowy hopes, and weave such lays As would encircle me with praise and love; So I should not die utterly—I should bring One branch from the gold forest, like the knight Of old tales, witnessing I had been there,)— And when all's done, how vain seems e'en success, And all the influence poets have o'er men! 'Tis a fine thing that one, weak as myself, Should sit in his lone room, knowing the words He utters in his solitude shall move Men like a swift wind—that the he be forgotten, Fair eyes shall glisten when his beauteous dreams

Of love come true in happier frames than his. Ay, the still night brought thoughts like these, but morn Came, and the mockery again laughed out At hollow praises, and smiles, almost sneers; And my soul's idol seemed to whisper me To dwell with him and his unhonoured name—And I well knew my spirit, that would be First in the struggle, and again would mak All bow to it; and I would sink again.

And then know that this curse will come on us, To see our idols perish—we may wither, Nor marvel—we are clay; but our low fate Should not extend them, whom trustingly We sent before into Time's yawning gulf, To face what e'er may lurk in darkness there—To see the painters' glory pass, and feel Sweet music move us not as once, or worst, To see decaying wits ere the frail body Decays. Nought makes me trust in love so really, As the delight of the contented lowness With which I gaze on souls I'd keep for ever In beauty—I'd be sad to equal them; I'd feed their fame e'en from my heart's best blood, Withering unseen, that they might flourish still.

Pauline, my sweet friend, thou dost not forget How this mood swayed me, when thou first wert mine, When I had set myself to live this life, Defying all opinion. Ere thou camest I was most happy, sweet, for old delights Had come like birds again; music, my life, I nourished more than ever, and old lore Loved for itself, and all it shows—the king Treading the purple calmly to his death, -While round him, like the clouds of eve, all dusk, The giant shades of fate, silently flitting, Pile the dim outline of the coming doom, —And him sitting alone in blood, while friends Are hunting far in the sunshine; and the boy, With his white breast and brow and clustering curls Streaked with his mother's blood, and striving hard To tell his story ere his reason goes. And when I loved thee, as I've loved so oft, Thou lovedst me, and I wondered, and looked in My heart to find some feeling like such love, Believing I was still what I had been;

And soon I found all faith had gone from me, And the late glow of life—changing like clouds, 'Twas not the morn-blush widening into day, But evening, coloured by the dying sun While darkness is quick hastening:—I will tell My state as though 'twere none of mine—despair Cannot come near me—thus it is with me.

Souls alter not, and mine must progress still; And this I knew not when I flung away My youth's chief aims. I ne'er supposed the loss Of what few I retained; for no resource Awaits me—now behold the change of all. I cannot chain my soul, it will not rest In its clay prison; this most narrow sphere—It has strange powers, and feelings, and desires, Which I cannot account for, nor explain, But which I stifle not, being bound to trust All feelings equally—to hear all sides:

Yet I cannot indulge them, and they live, Referring to some state or life unknown. . . .

My selfishness is satiated not, It wears me like a flame; my hunger for All pleasure, howsoe'er minute, is pain; I envy—how I envy him whose mind Turns with its energies to some one end! To elevate a sect, or a pursuit, However mean—so my still baffled hopes Seek out abstractions I would have but one Delight on earth, so it were wholly mine; One rapture all my soul could fill—and this Wild feeling places me in dream afar, In some wide country, where the eye can see No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn With shining towers and dwellings. I grow mad Well-nigh, to know not one abode but holds Some pleasure—for my soul could grasp them all, But must remain with this vile form. I look With hope to age at last, which quenching much, May let me concentrate the sparks it spares.

This restlessness of passion meets in me A craving after knowledge: the sole proof Of a commanding will is in that power Repressed; for I beheld it in its dawn, That sleepless harpy, with its budding wings, And I considered whether I should yield All hopes and fears, to live alone with it, Finding a recompence in it: wild eyes; And when I found that I should perish so, I bade its wild eyes close from me for ever;—And I am left alone with my delights,—So it lies in me a chained thing—still ready To serve me, if I loose its slightest bond—I cannot but be proud of my bright slave.

And thus I know this earth is not my sphere, For I cannot so narrow me, but that I still exceed it; in their elements My love would pass my reason—but since here Love must receive its objects from this earth, While reason will be chainless, the few truths Caught from its wanderings have sufficed to quell All love below;—then what must be that love Which, with the object it demands, would quell Reason, tho' it soared with the scraphim? No-what I feel may pass all human love, Yet fall far short of what my love should be; And yet I seem more warped in this than aught For here myself stands out more hideously. I can forget myself in friendship, fame, Or liberty, or love of mighty souls.

But I begin to know what thing hate is— To sicken, and to quiver, and grow white, And I myself have furnished its first prey. All my sad weaknesses, this wavering will, This selfishness, this still decaying frame . . But I must never grieve while I can pass Far from such thoughts—as now—Andromeda! And she is with me—years roll, I shall change, But change can touch her not—so beautiful With her dark eyes, earnest and still, and hair Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping breeze; And one red-beam, all the storm leaves in heaven, Resting upon her eyes and face and hair, As she awaits the snake on the wet beach, By the dark rock, and the white wave just breaking At her feet; quite naked and alone,—a thing You doubt not, nor fear for, secure that God Will come in thunder from the stars to save her. Let it pass—I will call another change. I will be gifted with a wond'rous soul, Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,

And in the wane of life; yet only so As to call up their fears, and there shall come A time requiring youth's best energies; And straight I fling age, sorrow, sickness off, And I rise triumphing over my decay.

And thus it is that I supply the chasm 'Twixt what I am and all that I would be. But then to know nothing—to hope for nothing—To seize on life's dull joys from a strange fear, Lest, losing them, all's lost, and nought remains.

There's some vile juggle with my reason here—I feel I but explain to my own loss
These impulses—they live no less the same.
Liberty! what though I despair—my blood
Rose not at a slave's name proudlier than now,
And sympathy obscured by sophistries.
Why have not I sought refuge in myself,
But for the woes I saw and could not stay—
And love!—do I not love thee, my Pauline?

I cherish prejudice, lest I be left
Utterly loveless—witness this belief
In poets, tho' sad change has come there too;
No more I leave myself to follow them:
Unconsciously I measure me by them.
Let me forget it; and I cherish most
My love of England—how her name—a word
Of her's in a strange tongue makes my heart beat

Pauline, I could do any thing—not now—
All's fever—but when calm shall come again—
I am prepared—I have made life my own—
I would not be content with all the change
One frame should feel—but I have gone in thought
Thro' all conjuncture—I have lived all life
When it is most alive—where strangest fate
New shapes it past surmise—the tales of men
Bit by some curse—or in the grasps of doom
Half visible and still increasing round,
Or crowning their wide being's general aim. . .

These are wild fancies, but I feel, sweet friend, As one breathing his weakness to the ear Of pitying angel—dear as a winter flower; A slight flower growing alone, and offering Its frail cup of three leaves to the cold sun, Yet joyous and confiding, like the friumph Of a child—and why am I not worthy thee?

I can live all the life of plants, and gaze Drowsily on the bees that flit and play, Or bare my breast for sunbeams which will kill, Or open in the night of sounds, to look For the dim stars; I can mount with the bird, Leaping airly his pyramid of leaves And twisted boughs of some tall mountain tree, Or rise cheerfully springing to the heavens—Or like a fish breathe in the morning air In the misty sun-warm water—or with flowers And trees can smile in light at the sinking sun, Just as the storm comes—as a girl would look On a departing lover—most serene.

Pauline, come with me—see how I could build A home for us, out of the world; in thought—I am inspired—come with me, Pauline!

Night, and one single ridge of narrow path Between the sullen river and the woods Waving and muttering-for the moonless night Has shaped them into images of life, Like the upraising of the giant-ghosts, Looking on earth to know how their sons fare. Thou art so close by me, the roughest swell Of wind in the tree-tops hides not the panting Of thy soft breasts; no-we will pass to morning-Morning—the rocks, and valleys, and old woods. How the sun brightens in the mist, and here,— Half in the air, like creatures of the place, Trusting the element-living on high boughs That swing in the wind—look at the golden spray, Flung from the feam-sheet of the cataract, Amid the broken rocks—shall we stay here With the wild hawks?—no, ere the hot noon come Dive we down—safe;—see this our new retreat Walled in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs. Dark, tangled, old and green-still sloping down To a small pool whose waters lie asleep Amid the trailing boughs turned water-plants

And tall trees over-arch to keep us in, Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts, And in the dreamy water one small group Of two or three strange trees are got together, Wondering at all around—as strange beasts herd Together far from their own land—all wildness— No turf nor moss, for boughs and plants pave all, And tongues of bank go shelving in the waters, Where the pale-throated snake reclines his head, And old grey stones lie making eddies there; The wild mice cross them dry-shod—deeper in— Shut thy soft eyes—now look—still deeper in: This is the very heart of the woods—all round, Mountain-like, heaped above us; yet even here One pond of water gleams—far off the river Sweeps like a sea, barred out from land; but one-One thin clear sheet has over-leaped and wound Into this silent depth, which gained, it lies Still, as but let by sufferance; the trees bend O'er it as wild men watch a sleeping girl. And thro' their roots long creeping plants stretch out Their twined hair, steeped and sparkling; farther on, Tall rushes and thick flag-knots have combined To narrow it; so, at length, a silver thread It winds, all noiselessly, thro' the deep wood, Till thro' a cleft way, thro' the moss and stone, It joins its parent-river with a shout. Up for the glowing day—leave the old woods: See, they part, like a ruined arch, the sky: Nothing but sky appears, so close the root And grass of the hill-top level with the air— Blue sunny air, where a great cloud floats, laden With light, like a dead whale that white birds pick, Floating away in the sun in some north sea. Air, air—fresh life-blood—thin and searching air— The clear, dear breath of God, that leveth us: Where small birds reel and winds take their delight. Water is beautiful, but not like air. See, where the solid azure waters lie. Made as of thickened air, and down below, The fern-ranks, like a forest, spread themselves, As the each pore could feel the element: Where the quick glancing serpent winds his way— Float with me there, Pauline, but not like air.

Down the hill—stop—a clump of trees, see, set On a heap of rocks, which look o'er the far plains, And envious climbing shrubs would mount to rest And peer from their spread boughs. There they wave, looking At the muleteers, who whistle as they go To the merry chime of their morning bells, and all The little smoking cots, and fields, and banks, And copses, bright in the sun; my spirit wanders. Hedge-rows for me—still, living, hedge cows, where The bushes close, and clasp above, and keep Thought in—I am concentrated—I feel:— But my soul saddens when it looks beyond: I cannot be immortal, nor taste all. O God! where does this tend—these struggling aims!* What would I have? what is this "sleep," which seems To bound all? can there be a "waking" point Of crowning life? The soul would never rule— It would be first in all things—it would have Its utmost pleasure filled,—but that complete Commanding for commanding sickens it. The last point that I can trace is, rest beneath Some better essence than itself—in weakness; This is "myself"—not what I think should be. And what is that I hunger for but God?

My God, my God! let me for once look on thee As the nought else existed: we alone. And as creation crumbles, my soul's spark Expands till I can say, "Even from myself "I need thee, and I feel thee, and I love thee;

Je crois que dans ce qui suit il fait allusion à un certain examen qu'il fit autrefois de l'âme ou plutot de son âme, pour découvrir la suité des objets auxquels il lui serait possible d'attendre, et dont chacun une fois obtenu devait former une espèce de plateau d'où l'on pouvait aperçevoir d'autres buts, d'autres projets, d'autres jouissances qui, à lour tour, devaient être surmontés. Il en résultait que l'oubli et le sommeil devaient tout terminer. Cette idee que je ne

saisis pas parfaitement lui est peutêtre aussi intelligible qu'à moi.

PAULINE.

^{*} Je crains bien que mon pauvre ami ne soit pas toujours parfaitement compris dans ce qui reste à lire de cet étrange fragment-mais il est moins propre que tout autre à éclaireir ce qui de sa nature ne peut jamais être que songe et confusion. D'ailleurs je ne sais trop si en cherchant à mieux co-ordonner certaines parties l'on ne courrait pas le risque de nuire au seul mérite auquel une production si singuliere peut prétendre-celui de donner une idée assez précise du genre qu'elle n'a fait que ébaucher.—Ce début sans prétention, ce remuement des passions qui va d'abord en accroissant et puis s'appaise par degrés, ces élans de l'ane, ce retour soudain sur soi-même.—Et par dessus tout, la tournure d'esprit toute particulière de mon ami rendent les changemens presque impossibles. Les raisons qu'il fait valoir ailleurs, et d'autres encore plus puissantes, ont fait trouver grâce à mes yeux pour cet écrit qu'autrement je lui cusse conseillé de jeter au feu—Je n'en crois pas moins au grand principe de toute composition—à ce principe de Shakspeare, de Raffaelle, de Beethoven, d'où il suit que la concentration des idées est due bien plus à leur conception, qu'à leur mise en execution . . . j'ai tout lieu de craindre que la première de ces qualités ne soit encore étrangère à mon ami—et je doute fort qu'un redoublement de travail lui fasse acquérir la seconde. Le mieux serait de bruler ceci; mais que faire?

"I do not plead my rapture in thy works "For love of thee—or that I feel as one

"Who cannot die-but there is that in me

"Which turns to thee, which loves, or which should love."

Why have I girt myself with this hell-dress?
Why have I laboured to put out my life?
Is it not in my nature to adore,
And e'en for all my reason do I not
Feel him, and thank him, and pray to him?—Now.
Can I forego the trust that he loves me?
Do I not feel a love which only one . . .
O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed,
I have denied thee calmly—do I not
Pant when I read of thy consummate deeds,
And burn to see thy calm, pure truths out-flash
The brightest gleans of earth's philosophy?
Do I not shake to hear aught question thee?

If I am erring save me, madden me,
Take from me powers, and pleasures—let me die
Ages, so I see thee: I am knit round
As with a charm, by sin and lust and pride,
Yet tho' my wandering dreams have seen all shapes
Of strange delight, oft have I stood by thee—
Have I been keeping lonely watch with thee,
In the damp night by weeping Olivet,
Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less—
Or dying with thee on the lonely cross—
Or witnessing thy bursting from the tomb!

A mortal, sin's familiar friend doth here Avow that he will give all earth's reward, But to believe and humbly teach the faith, In suffering, and poverty, and shame, Only believing he is not unloved. . . .

And now, my Pauline, I am thine for ever!
I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up
Deserting me: and old shades gathering on;
Yet while its last light waits, I would say much,
And chiefly, I am glad that I have said
That love which I have ever felt for thee,
But seldom told; our hearts so beat together,
That speech is mockery, but when dark hours come;
And I feel sad; and thou, sweet, deem'st it strange;
A sorrow moves me, thou canst not remove.

Look on this lay I dedicate to thee, Which thro' thee I began, and which I end, Collecting the last gleams to strive to tell That I am thine, and more than ever now— That I am sinking fast—yet tho' I sink, No less I feel that thou hast brought me bliss. And that I still may hope to win it back. Thou know'st, dear friend, I could not think all calm, For wild dreams followed me, and bore me off. And all was indistinct. Ere one was caught Another glanced: so dazzled by my wealth, Knowing not which to leave nor which to choose, For all my thoughts so floated, nought was fixed— And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one Who shadowed out the stages of all life, And so thou badest me tell this my first stage:— 'Tis done; and even now I feel all dim the shift Of thought. These are my last thoughts; I discern Faintly immortal life, and truth, and good. And why thou must be mine is, that e'en now, In the dim hush of night—that I have done— With fears and sad forebodings: I look thro' And say, "E'en at the last I have her still, "With her delicious eyes as clear as heaven, "When rain in a quick shower has beat down mist, "And clouds float white in the sun like broods of swans." How the blood lies upon her cheek, all spread As thinned by kisses; only in her lips It wells and pulses like a living thing, And her neck looks, like marble misted o'er With love-breath, a dear thing to kiss and love, Standing beneath me—looking out to ma As I might kill her and be loved for it.

Love me—love me, Pauline, love nought but me; Leave me not. All these words are wild and weak, Believe them not, Pauline. I stooped so low But to behold thee purer by my side, To show thou art my breath—my life—a last Resource—an extreme want: never believe Aught better could so look to thee, nor seek Again the world of good thoughts left for me. There were bright troops of undiscovered suns, Each equal in their radiant course. There were Clusters of far fair isles, which ocean kept For his own joy, and his waves broke on them Without a choice. And there was a dim crowd Of visions, each a part of the dim whole.

And a star left his peers and came with peace Upon a storm, and all eyes pined for him. And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship, And the crew wandered in its bowers, and plucked Its fruits, and gave up all their hopes for home. And one dream came to a pale poet's sleep, And he said, "I am singled out by God, "No sin must touch me." I am very weak, But what I would express is,—Leave me not, Still sit by me—with beating breast, and hair Loosened—watching earnest by my side. Turning my books, or kissing me when I Look up—like summer wind. Be still to me A key to music's mystery, when mind fails. A reason, a solution, and a clue. You see I have thrown off my prescribed rules: I hope in myself—and hope, and pant, and love— You'll find me better—know me more than when You loved me as I was. Smile not; I have Much yet to gladden you—to dawn on you.

No more of the past—I'll look within no more— I have too trusted to my own wild wants— Too trusted to myself—to intuition, Draining the wine alone in the still night, And seeing how—as gathering films arose, As by an inspiration life seemed bare And grinning in its vanity, and ends Hard to be dreamed of, stared at me as fixed, And others suddenly became all foul, As a fair witch turned an old hag at night, No more of this—we will go hand in hand, I will go with thee, even as a child, Looking no further than thy sweet commands. And thou hast chosen where this life shall be— The land which gave me thee shall be our home, Where nature lies all wild amid her lakes And snow-swarthed mountains, and vast pines all girt With ropes of snow—where nature lies all bare, Suffering none to view her but a race Most stinted and deformed—like the mute dwarfs Which wait upon a naked Indian queen. And there (the time being when the heavens are thick With storms) I'll sit with thee while thou dost sing Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird Who crieth as he flies for perfect joy, Or telling me old stories of dead knights. Or I will read old lays to thee—how she,

The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave With power to love, and to be loved, and live. Or we will go together, like twin gods Of the infernal world, with scented lamp Over the dead—to call and to awake— Over the unshaped images which lie Within my mind's cave—only leaving all That tells of the past doubts. So when spring comes, And sunshine comes again like an old smile, And the fresh waters, and awakened birds, And budding woods await us—I shall be Prepared, and we will go and think again, And all old loves shall come to us -- but changed As some sweet thought which harsh words veiled before: Feeling God loves us, and that all that errs, Is a strange dream which death will dissipate; And then when I am firm we'll seek again My own land, and again I will approach My old designs, and calmly look on all The works of my past weakness, as one views Some scene where danger met him long before. Ah! that such pleasant life should be but dreamed!

But whate'er come of it- and tho' it fade, And tho' ere the cold morning all be gone As it will be ;—tho' music wait for me, And fair eyes and bright wine, laughing like sin, Which steals back softly on a soul half saved; And I be first to deny all, and despise This verse, and these intents which seem so fair: Still this is all my own, this moment's pride, No less I make an end in perfect joy. E'en in my brightest time, a lurking fear I well knew my weak resolves, Possessed me. I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep Over its treasures—as one half afraid To make his riches definite—but now These feelings shall not utterly be lost, I shall not know again that nameless care, Lest leaving all undone in youth, some new And undreamed end reveal itself too late: For this song shall remain to tell for ever, That when I lost all hope of such a change, Suddenly Beauty rose on me again. No less I make an end in perfect joy, For I, having thus again been visited, Shall doubt not many another bliss awaits, And tho' this weak soul sink, and darkness come,

Some little word shall light it up again,
And I shall see all clearer and love better;
I shall again go o'er the tracts of thought,
As one who has a right; and I shall live
With poets—calmer—purer still each time,
And beauteous shapes will come to me again,
And unknown secrets will be trusted me,
Which were not mine when wavering—but now
I shall be priest and lover, as of old.

Sun-treader, I believe in God, and truth,
And love; and as one just escaped from death
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel
He lives indeed—so, I would lean on thee;
Thou must be ever with me—most in gloom
When such shall come—but chiefly when I die,
For I seem dying, as one going in the dark
To fight a giant—and live thou for ever,
And be to all what thou hast been to me—
All in whom this wakes pleasant thoughts of me,
Know my last state is happy—free from doubt,
Or touch of fear. Love me and wish me well!

RICHMOND, October 22, 1832.



CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

CHRISTMAS-EVE.

ı.

Our of the little chapel I burst Into the fresh night air again. I had waited a good five minutes first In the doorway, to escape the rain That drove in gusts down the common's centre, At the edge of which the chapel stands, Before I plucked up heart to enter: Heaven knows how many sorts of hands Reached past me, groping for the latch Of the inner door that hung on catch, More obstinate the more they fumbled, Till, giving way at last with a scold Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled One sheep more to the rest in fold, And left me irresolute, standing sentry In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry Four feet long by two feet wide, Partitioned off from the vast inside-I blocked up half of it at least. No remedy; the rain kept driving: They eyed me much as some wild beast, That congregation, still arriving, Some of them by the mainroad, white A long way past me into the night, Skirting the common, then diverging; Not a few suddenly emerging From the common's self thro' the paling-gaps,--They house in the gravel pits perhaps, Where the road stops short with its safeguard border Of lamps, as tired of such disorder;-

But the most turned in yet more abruptly From a certain squalid knot of alleys, Where the town's bad blood once slept corruptly, Which now the little chapel rallies And leads into day again,—its priestliness Lending itself to hide their beastliness So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason), And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on Those neophytes too much in lack of it, That, where you cross the common as I did, And meet the party thus presided, "Mount Zion," with Love-lane at the back of it, They front you as little disconcerted, As, bound for the hills, her fate averted And her wicked people made to mind him, Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

II.

Well, from the road, the lanes or the common. In came the flock: the fat weary woman, Panting and bewildered, down-clapping Her umbrella with a mighty report, Grounded it by me, wry and flapping, A wreck of whalebones; then, with a snort, Like a startled horse, at the interloper Who humbly knew himself improper, But could not shrink up small enough, Round to the door, and in,—the gruff Hinge's invariable scold Making your very blood run cold. Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered On broken clogs, the many-tattered Little old-faced, peaking sister-turned-mother Of the sickly babe she tried to smother Somehow up, with its spotted face, From the cold, on her breast, the one warm place: She too must stop, wring the poor suds dry Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping Already from my own clothes' dropping, Which yet she seemed to grudge I should stand on: Then stooping down to take off her pattens, She bore them defiantly, in each hand one, Planted together before her breast And its babe, as good as a lance in rest. Close on her heels, the dingy satins Of a female something, past me flitted,

With lips as much too white, as a streak Lay far too red on each hollow cheek; And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied All that was left of a woman once, Holding at least its tongue for the nonce. Then a tall vellow man, like the Penitent Thief. With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief, And eyelids screwed together tight, Led himself in by some inner light. And, except from him, from each that entered, I had the same interrogation— "What, you, the alien, you have ventured "To take with us, elect, your station? "A carer for none of it, a Gallio?"— Thus, plain as print, I read the glance At a common prey, in each countenance, As of huntsman giving his hounds the tallyho: And, when the door's cry drowned their wonder. The draught, it always sent in shutting, Made the flame of the single tallow candle In the cracked square lanthorn I stood under. Shoot its blue lip at me, rebutting, As it were, the luckless cause of scandal: I verily thought the zealous light (In the chapel's secret, too!) for spite, Would shudder itself clean off the wick, With the airs of a St. John's Candlestick. There was no standing it much longer. "Good folks," said I, as resolve grew stronger, "This way you perform the Grand-Inquisitor, "When the weather sends you a chance visitor? "You are the men, and wisdom shall die with you, "And none of the old Seven Churches vie with you! "But still, despite the pretty perfection "To which you carry your trick of exclusiveness, "And, taking God's word under wise protection, "Correct its tendency to diffusiveness, "Bidding one reach it over hot ploughshares,-"Still, as I say, though you've found salvation, "If I should choose to cry—as now—' Shares!'— "See if the best of you bars me my ration! "Because I prefer for my expounder "Of the laws of the feast, the feast's own Founder: "Mine's the same right with your poorest and sickliest, "Supposing I don the marriage vestiment; "So, shut your mouth, and open your Testament, "And carve me my portion at your quickliest!" Accordingly, as a shoemaker's lad

With wizened face in want of soap,
And wet apron wound round his waist like a rope,
After stopping outside, for his cough was bad,
To get the fit over, poor gentle creature,
And so avoid disturbing the preacher,
Passed in, I sent my elbow spikewise
At the shutting door, and entered likewise,—
Received the hinge's accustomed greeting,
Crossed the threshold's magic pentacle,
And found myself in full conventicle,
—To wit, in Zion's Chapel Meeting,
On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,
Which, calling its flock to their special clover,
Found them assembled and one sheep over,
Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was mine.

III.

I very soon had enough of it. The hot smell and the human noises, And my neighbour's coat, the greasy cuff of it, Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises, Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure Of the preaching man's immense stupidity, As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure, To meet his audience's avidity. You needed not the wit of the Sybil To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling— No sooner had our friend an inkling Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible, (Whenever it was the thought first struck him How Death, at unawares, might duck him Deeper than the grave, and quench The gin-shop's light in Hell's grim drench), Then he handled it so, in fine irreverence, As to hug the Book of books to pieces: And, a patchwork of chapters and texts in severance, Not improved by the private dog's ears and creases, Having clothed his own soul with, he'd fain see equipt yours,---

So tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.
And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt:
Nay, had but a single face of my neighbours
Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labours
Were help which the world could be saved without,
'Tis odds but I had borne in quiet
Aqualm or two at my spiritual diet;

Or, who can tell? had even mustered Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon: But the flock sate on, divinely flustered, Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon With such content in every snuffle, As the devil inside us loves to ruffle. My old fat woman purred with pleasure, And thumb round thumb went twirling faster, While she, to his periods keeping measure, Maternally devoured the pastor. The man with the handkerchief, untied it. Showed us a horrible wen inside it, Gave his eyelids yet another screwing, And rocked himself as the woman was doing. The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking, Kept down his cough. 'Twas too provoking! My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff of it, And saying, like Eve when she plucked the apple, "I wanted a taste, and now there's enough of it," I flung out of the little chapel.

IV.

There was a lull in the rain, a lull In the wind too; the moon was risen, And would have shone out pure and full, But for the ramparted cloud-prison, Block on block built up in the west, For what purpose the wind knows best, Who changes his mind continually. And the empty other half of the sky Seemed in its silence as if it knew What, any moment, might look through A chance-gap in that fortress massy:— Through its fissures you got hints Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints, Now, a dull lion-colour, now, brassy Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow, Like furnace smoke just ere the flames bellow, All a simmer with intense strain To let her through,—then blank again, At the hope of her appearance failing. Just by the chapel a break in the railing Shows a narrow path directly across; 'Tis ever dry walking there, on the moss— Besides, you go gently all the way uphill: I stooped under and soon felt better:

My head grew light, my limbs more supple, As I walked on, glad to have slipt the fetter; My mind was full of the scene I had left, That placed flock, that pastor vociferant, -How this outside was pure and different! The sermon—now, what a mingled weft Of good and ill! were either less, Its fellow had coloured the whole distinctly; But alas for the excellent earnestness, And the truths, quite true if stated succinctly, But as surely false, in their quaint presentment, However to pastor and flock's contentment! Say rather, such truths looked false to your eyes, With his provings and parallels twisted and twined, Till how could you know them, grown double their size, In the natural fog of the good man's mind? Like yonder spots of our roadside lamps, Haloed about with the common's damps. Truth remains true, the fault's in the prover; The zeal was good, and the aspiration; And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over, Pharaoh received no demonstration By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three, Of the doctrine of the Trinity,— Although, as our preacher thus embellished it, Apparently his hearers relished it With so unfeigned a gust—who knows if They did not prefer our friend to Joseph? But so it is everywhere, one way with all of them! These people have really felt, no doubt, A something, the motion they style the Call of them: And this is their method of bringing about, By a mechanism of words and tones, (So many texts in so many groans A sort of reviving or reproducing, More or less perfectly, (who can tell?—) Of the mood itself, that strengthens by using; And how it happens, I understand well. A tune was born in my head last week, Out of the thump-thump and shriek-shriek Of the train, as I came by it, up from Manchester; And when, next week, I take it back again, My head will sing to the engine's clack again, While it only makes my neighbour's haunches stir, -Finding no dormant musical sprout In him, as in me, to be jolted out. 'Tis the taught already that profit by teaching; He gets no more from the railway's preaching,

Than, from this preacher who does the rail's office, I, Whom therefore the flock casts a jealous eye on. Still, why paint over their door "Mount Zion," To which all flesh shall come, saith the prophecy?

v.

But wherefore be harsh on a single case? After how many modes, this Christmas-Eve, Does the selfsame weary thing take place? The same endeavour to make you believe, And much with the same effect, no more: Each method abundantly convincing, As I say, to those convinced before, But scarce to be swallowed without wincing, By the not-as-yet convinced. For me, I have my own church equally. And in this church my faith sprang first! (I said, as I reached the rising ground, And the wind began again, with a burst Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound From the heart beneath, as if, God speeding me, I entered His church-door, Nature leading me) —In youth I looked to these very skies, And probing their immensities, I found God there, His visible power; Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense Of that power, an equal evidence That His love, there too, was the nobler dower. For the loving worm within its clod, Were diviner than a loveless god Amid his worlds, I will dare to say. You know what I mean: God's all, man's nought But also, God, whose pleasure brought Man into being, stands away As it were, an handbreadth off, to give Room for the newly-made to live, And look at Him from a place apart, And use His gifts of brain and heart, Given, indeed, but to keep for ever. Who speaks of man, then, must not sever Man's very elements from man, Saying, "But all is God's"—whose plan Was to create man and then leave him Able, His own word saith, to grieve Him, But able to glorify Him too, As a mere machine could never do.

That prayed or praised, all unaware Of its fitness for aught but praise and prayer, Made perfect as a thing of course. Man, therefore, stands on his own stock Of love and power as a pin-point rock, And, looking to God who ordained divorce Of the rock from His boundless continent, Sees in His Power made evident, Only excess by a million fold O'er the power God gave man in the mould. For, see: Man's hands, first formed to carry A few pounds' weight, when taught to marry Its strength with an engine's, lifts a mountain. -Advancing in power by one degree; And why count steps through eternity? But Love is the ever springing fountain: Man may enlarge or narrow his bed For the water's play, but the water head-How can he multiply or reduce it? As easy create it, as cause it to cease: He may profit by it, or abuse it But 'tis not a thing to bear increase As power will: be love less or more In the heart of man, he keeps it shut Or opes it wide as he pleases, but Love's sum remains what it was before. So, gazing up, in my youth, at love As seen through power, ever above All modes which make it manifest, My soul brought all to a single test— That He, the Eternal First and Last, Who, in His power, had so surpassed All man conceives of what is might,— Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite, -Would prove as infinitely good; Would never, my soul understood, With power to work all love desires, Bestow e'en less than man requires: That He who endlessly was teaching, Above my spirit's utmost reaching, What love can do in the leaf or stone. (So that to master this alone, This done in the stone or leaf for me, I must go on learning endlessly) Would never need that I, in turn, Should point him out a defect unheeded. And show that God had yet to learn What the meanest human creature needed.—

-Not life, to wit, for a few short years, Tracking His way through doubts and fears, While the stupid earth on which I stay Suffers no change, but passive adds Its myriad years to myriads, Though I, He gave it to, decay, Seeing death come and choose about me, And my dearest ones depart without me. No! love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it, Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it, The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it, Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it! And I shall behold Thee, face to face, O God, and in Thy light retrace How in all I loved here, still wast Thou! Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would now, I shall find as able to satiate The love, Thy gift, as my spirit's wonder Thou art able to quicken and sublimate, With this sky of Thine, that I now walk under. And glory in Thee as thus I gaze, -- Thus, thus! oh, let men keep their ways Of seeking Thee in a narrow shrine— Be this my way! And this is mine!

VI.

For lo, what think you? suddenly The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky Received at once the full fruition Of the moon's consummate apparition. The black cloud-barricade was riven, Ruined beneath her feet, and driven Deep in the west; while, bare and breathless, North and south and east lay ready For a glorious Thing, that, dauntless, deathless, Sprang across them, and stood steady. 'Twas a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect, From heaven to heaven extending, perfect As the mother-moon's self, full in face. It rose, distinctly at the base With its seven proper colours chorded, Which still, in the rising, were compressed, Until at last they coalesced, And supreme the spectral creature lorded In a triumph of whitest white,— Above which intervened the night.

But above night too, like the next,
The second of a wondrous sequence,
Reaching in rare and rarer frequence.
Till the heaven of heavens be circumflext,
Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
Fainter, flushier, and flightier,—
Rapture dying along its verge!
Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
Whose, from the straining topmost dark,
On to the keystone of that are?

VII.

This sight was shown me, there and then,— Me, one out of a world of men, Singled, forth, as the chance might hap To another, if in a thunderclap Where I heard noise, and you saw flame, Some one man knew God called his name. For me, I think I said, "Appear! "Good were it to be ever here. "If Thou wilt, let me build to Thee "Service-tabernacles Three, "Where, for ever in Thy presence, "In extatic acquiescence, "Far alike from thriftless learning "And ignorance's undiscerning, "I may worship and remain!" Thus, at the show above me, gazing With upturned eyes, I felt my brain Glutted with the glory, blazing Throughout its whole mass, over and under, Until at length it burst asunder, And out of it bodily there streamed The too-much glory, as it seemed, Passing from out me to the ground. Then palely serpentining round Into the dark with mazy error.

VIII.

All at once I looked up with terror. He was there. He Himself with His human air, On the narrow pathway, just before: I saw the back of Him, no more—

He had left the chapel, then, as I. I forgot all about the sky. No face: only the sight Of a sweepy Garment, vast and white, With a hem that I could recognise. I felt terror, no surprise: My mind filled with the cataract. At one bound, of the mighty fact. I remembered, He did say Doubtless, that, to this world's end, Where two or three should meet and pray, He would be in the midst, their Friend: Certainly He was there with them. And my pulses leaped for joy Of the golden thought without alloy, That I saw His very Vesture's hem. Then rushed the blood back, cold and clear With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear, And I hastened, cried out while I pressed To the salvation of the Vest. "But not so, Lord! It cannot be "That Thou, indeed, art leaving me-"Me, that have despised Thy friends. "Did my heart make no amends? "Thou art the Love of God—above "His Power, didst hear me place His Love, "And that was leaving the world for Thee! "Therefore Thou must not turn from me "As if I had chosen the other part. "Folly and pride o'ercame my heart. "Our best is bad, nor bears Thy test; "Still it should be our very best. "I thought it best that Thou, the Spirit, "Be worshipped in spirit and in truth, "And in beauty, as even we require it— "Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth, "I left but now, as scarcely fitted "For Thee: I knew not what I pitied: "But, all I felt there, right or wrong, "What is it to Thee, who curest sinning? "Am I not weak as Thou art strong? "I have looked to Thee from the beginning, "Straight up to Thee through all the world "Which, like an idle scroll, lay furled "To nothingness on either side: "And since the time Thou wast descried, "Spite of the weak heart, so have I

"Lived ever, and so fain would die,

"Living and dying, Thee before! "But if Thou leavest me-"

IX.

Less or more,

I suppose that I spoke thus. When,-have mercy, Lord, on us! The whole Face turned upon me full. And I spread myself beneath it, As when the bleacher spreads, to see the it In the cleansing sun, his wool,— Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness Some defiled, discoloured web— So lay I, saturate with brightness. And when the flood appeared to obb, Lo, I was walking, light and swift, With my senses settling fast and steadying, But my body caught up in the whirl and drift Of the Vesture's amplitude, still eddying On, just before me, still to be followed, As it carried me after with its motion: What shall I say?—as a path were hollowed And a man went weltering through the ocean, Sucked along in the flying wake Of the luminous water-snake. Darkness and cold were cloven, as through I passed, upborne yet walking too. And I turned to myself at intervals,— "So He said, and so it befals. "God who registers the cup

"Of mere cold water, for His sake

"To a disciple rendered up,

"Disdains not His own thirst to slake "At the poorest love was ever offered:

"And because it was my heart I proffered,

"With true love trembling at the brim, "He suffers me to follow Him

"For ever, my own way,--dispensed

"From seeking to be influenced

"By all the less immediate ways That earth, in worships manifold,

"Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,

"The Garment's hem, which, lo, I hold!"

x.

And so we crossed the world and stopped. For where am I, in city or plain,

Since I am 'ware of the world again? And what is this that rises propped With pillars of prodigious girth? Is it really on the earth, This miraculous Dome of God? Has the angel's measuring-rod Which numbered cubits, gem from gem, 'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem. Meted it out,—and what he meted, Have the sons of men completed? -Binding, ever as he bade, Columns in this colonnade With arms wide open to embrace The entry of the human race To the breast of . . . what is it, you building, Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding, With marble for brick, and stones of price For garniture of the edifice? Now I see: it is no dream: It stands there and it does not seem; For ever, in pictures, thus it looks, And thus I have read of it in books, Often in England, leagues away, And wondered how those fountains play, Growing up eternally Each to a musical water-tree, Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon, Before my eyes, in the light of the moon, To the granite lavers underneath. Liar and dreamer in your teeth! I, the sinner that speak to you, Was in Rome this night, and stood, and knew Both this and more! For see, for see, The dark is rent, mine eye is free To pierce the crust of the outer wall, And I view inside, and all there, all, As the swarming hollow of a hive, The whole Basilica alive! Men in the chancel, body, and nave, Men on the pillars' architrave, Men on the statues, men on the tombs With popes and kings in their porphyry wombs All famishing in expectation Of the main-altar's consummation. For see, for see, the rapturous moment Approaches, and earth's best endowment Blends with heaven's: the taper-fires Pant up, the winding brazen spires

Heave loftier yet the baldachin, The incense-gaspings, long kept in, Suspire in clouds; the organ blatant Holds his breath and grovels latent, As if God's hushing finger grazed him, (Like Behemoth when He praised him) At the silver bell's shrill tinkling, Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling On the sudden pavement strewed With faces of the multitude. Earth breaks up, time drops away, In flows heaven, with its new day Of endless life, when He who trod, Very Man and very God, This earth in weakness, shame and pain, Dying the death whose signs remain Up yonder on the accursed tree,— Shall come again, no more to be Of captivity the thrall, But the one God, all in all, King of kings, and Lord of lords, As His servant John received the words, "I died, and live for evermore!"

XI.

Yet I was left outside the door. Why sate I there on the threshold-stone, Left till He returns, alone Save for the Garment's extreme fold Abandoned still to bless my hold?— My reason, to my doubt, replied, As if a book were opened wide, And at a certain page I traced Every record undefaced, Added by successive years,— The harvestings of truth's stray ears Singly gleaned, and in one sheaf Bound together for belief. Yes, I said—that He will go And sit with these in turn, I know. Their faith's heart beats, though her head swims Too giddily to guide her limbs, Disabled by their palsy-stroke From propping me. Though Rome's gross yoke Drops off, no more to be endured, Her teaching is not so obscured

By errors and perversities, That no truth shines athwart the lies: And He, whose eye detects a spark Even where, to man's, the whole seems dark, May well see flame where each beholder Acknowledges the embers smoulder. But I, a mere man, fear to quit The clue God gave me as most fit To guide my footsteps through life's maze, Because Himself discerns all ways Open to reach Him: I, a man He gave to mark where faith began To swerve aside, till from its summit Judgment drops her damning plummet, Pronouncing such a fatal space Departed from the Founder's base: He will not bid me enter too, But rather sit, as now I do, Awaiting His return outside. -'Twas thus my reason straight replied, And joyously I turned, and pressed The Garment's skirt upon my breast, Until, afresh its light suffusing me, My heart cried,—what has been abusing me That I should wait here lonely and coldly, Instead of rising, entering boldly, Baring truth's face, and letting drift Her veils of lies as they choose to shift? Do these men praise Him? I will raise My voice up to their point of praise! I see the error; but above The scope of error, see the love.— Oh, love of those first Christian days! —Fanned so soon into a blaze, From the spark preserved by the trampled sect, That the antique sovereign Intellect Which then sate ruling in the world, Like a change in dreams, was hurled From the throne he reigned upon: --You looked up, and he was gone! Gone, his glory of the pen! -Love, with Greece and Rome in ken, Bade her scribes abhor the trick Of poetry and rhetoric, And exult, with hearts set free, In blessed imbecility Scrawled, perchance, on some torn sheet, Leaving Livy incomplete.

Gone, his pride of sculptor, painter! —Love, while able to acquaint her With the thousand statues yet Fresh from chisel pictures wet From brush, she saw on every side, Chose rather with an infant's pride To frame those portents which impart Such unction to true Christian Art. Gone, Music too! The air was stirred By happy wings: Terpander's bird (That, when the cold came, fled away) Would tarry not the wintry day,-As more-enduring sculpture must, Till a filthy saint rebuked the gust With which he chanced to get a sight Of some dear naked Aphrodite He glanced a thought above the toes of, By breaking zealously her nose off. Love, surely, from that music's lingering, Might have filched her organ-fingering, Nor chose rather to set prayings To hog-grunts, praises to horse-neighings. Love was the startling thing, the new; Love was the all-sufficient too; And seeing that, you see the rest. As a babe can find its mother's breast As well in darkness as in light, Love shut our eyes, and all seemed right. True, the world's eyes are open now: -Less need for me to disallow Some few that keep Love's zone unbuckled, Peevish as ever to be suckled, Lulled by the same old baby-prattle With intermixture of the rattle, When she would have them creep, stand steady Upon their feet, or walk already, Not to speak of trying to climb. I will be wise another time, And not desire a wall between us, When next I see a church-roof cover So many species of one genus, All with foreheads bearing Lover Written above the earnest eyes of them; All with breasts that beat for beauty, Whether sublimed, to the surprise of them, In noble daring, steadfast duty, The heroic in passion, or in action,— Or, lowered for the senses' satisfaction,

To the mere outside of human creatures, Mere perfect form and faultless features. What! with all Rome here, whence to levy Such contributions to their appetite, With women and men in a gorgeous bevy, They take, as it were, a padlock, and clap it tight On their southern eyes, restrained from feeding On the glories of their ancient reading, On the beauties of their modern singing, On the wonders of the builder's bringing, On the majesties of Art around them,— And, all these loves, late struggling incessant, When faith has at last united and bound them. They offer up to God for a present! Why, I will, on the whole, be rather proud of it,— And, only taking the act in reference To the other recipients who might have allowed of it. I will rejoice that God had the preference!

XII.

So I summed up my new resolves: Too much love there can never be. And where the intellect devolves Its function on love exclusively, I, as one who possesses both, Will accept the provision, nothing loth, -Will feast my love, then depart elsewhere, That my intellect may find its share. And ponder, O soul, the while thou departest, And see thou applaud the great heart of the artist, Who, examining the capabilities Of the block of marble he has to fashion Into a type of thought or passion,— Not always, using obvious facilities, Shapes it, as any artist can, Into a perfect symmetrical man, Complete from head to foot of the life-size, Such as old Adam stood in his wife's eyes,— But, now and then, bravely aspires to consummat. A Colossus by no means so easy to come at, And uses the whole of his block for the bust. Leaving the minds of the public to finish it, Since cut it ruefully short he must: On the face alone he expends his devotion; He rather would mar than resolve to diminish it. —Saying, "Applaud me for this grand notion "Of what a face may be! As for completing it

"In breast and body and limbs, do that, you!" All hail! I fancy how, happily meeting it, A trunk and legs would perfect the statue, Could man carve so as to answer volition. And how much nobler than petty cavils, A hope to find, in my spirit-travels, Some artist of another ambition, Who having a block to carve, no bigger, Has spent his power on the opposite quest, And believed to begin at the feet was best—For so may I see, ere I die, the whole figure!

XIII.

No sooner said than out in the night! And still as we swept through storm and night, My heart beat lighter and more light: And lo, as before, I was walking swift, With my senses settling fast and steadying, But my body caught up in the whirl and drift Of the Vesture's amplitude, still eddying On just before me, still to be followed, As it carried me after with its motion, —What shall I say?—as a path were hollowed And a man went weltering through the ocean, Sucked along in the flying wake Of the luminous water-snake.

XIV.

I am left alone once more— Alone! (Save for the Garment's extreme fold Abandoned still to bless my hold) Alone, beside the entrance-door Of a sort of temple,—perhaps a college, —Like nothing I ever saw before At home in England, to my knowledge. The tall, old, quaint, irregular town! It may be . . though which, I can't affirm . . any Of the famous middle-age towns of Germany; And this flight of stairs where I sit down, Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, or Frankfort, Or Göttingen, that I have to thank for't? It may be Göttingen,—most likely. Through the open door I catch obliquely Glimpses of a lecture-hall; And not a bad assembly neither— Ranged decent and symmetrical On benches, waiting what's to see there:

Which, holding still by the Vesture's hem, I also resolve to see with them. Cautious this time how I suffer to slip The chance of joining in fellowship With any that call themselves His friends, As these folks do, I have a notion. But hist—a buzzing and emotion! All settle themselves, the while ascends By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk, Step by step, deliberate Because of his cranium's over-freight, Three parts sublime to one grotesque, If I have proved an accurate guesser, The hawk-nosed, high-cheek-boned Professor. I felt at once as if there ran A shoot of love from my heart to the man-That sallow, virgin-minded, studious Martyr to mild enthusiasm, As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious That woke my sympathetic spasm, (Beside some spitting that made me sorry) And stood, surveying his auditory With a wan pure look, well nigh celestial,— —Those blue eyes had survived so much! While, under the foot they could not smutch, Lay all the fleshly and the bestial. Over he bowed, and arranged his notes, Till the auditory's clearing of throats Was done with, died into a silence; And, when each glance was upward sent, Each bearded mouth composed intent. And a pin might be heard drop half a mile hence,— He pushed back higher his spectacles, Let the eyes stream out like lamps from cells, And giving his head of hair—a hake Of undressed tow, for colour and quantity— One rapid and impatient shake, (As our own young England adjusts a jaunty tie When about to impart, on mature digestion, Some thrilling view of the surplice question) —The Professor's grave voice, sweet though hoarse. Broke into his Christmas-Eve's discourse.

XV.

And he began it by observing How reason dictated that men

Should rectify the natural swerving, By a reversion, now and then, To the well-heads of knowledge, few And far away, whence rolling grew The life-stream wide whereat we drink, Commingled, as we needs must think, With waters alien to the source: To do which, aimed this Eve's discourse. Since, where could be a fitter time For tracing backward to its prime, This Christianity, this lake, This reservoir, whereat we slake, From one or other bank, our thirst? So he proposed inquiring first Into the various sources whence This Myth of Christ is derivable; Demanding from the evidence, (Since plainly no such life was liveable) How these phenomena should class? Whether 'twere best opine Christ was. Or never was at all, or whether He was and was not, both together— It matters little for the name, So the Idea be left the same: Only, for practical purpose' sake, 'Twas obviously as well to take The popular story,—understanding How the ineptitude of the time, And the penman's prejudice, expanding Fact into fable fit for the clime, Had, by slow and sure degrees, translated it Into this myth, this Individuum,— Which, when reason had strained and abated it Of foreign matter, gave, for residuum, A Man!—a right true man, however, Whose work was worthy a man's endeavour! Work, that gave warrant almost sufficient To his disciples, for rather believing. He was just omnipotent and omniscient, As it gives to us, for as frankly receiving His word, their tradition,—which, though it mean Something entirely different From all that those who only heard it, In their simplicity thought and averred it, Had yet a meaning quite as respectable: For, among other doctrines delectable, Was he not surely the first to insist on, The natural sovereignty of our race?—

Here the lecturer came to a pausing-place; And while his cough, like a drouthy piston, Tried to dislodge the husk that grew to him, I seized the occasion of bidding adieu to him, The Vesture still within my hand.

XVI.

I could interpret its command. This time He would not bid me enter The exhausted air-bell of the Critic. Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic When Papist struggles with Dissenter, Impregnating its pristine clarity, —One, by his daily fare's vulgarity, Its gust of broken meat and garlic: —One, by his soul's too-much presuming, To turn the frankincense's funning And vapours of the candle starlike Into the cloud her wings she buoys on: And each, that sets the pure air seething, Poisoning it for healthy breathing— But the Critic leaves no air to poison; Pumps out by a ruthless ingenuity Atom by atom, and leaves you—vacuity. Thus much of Christ, does he reject? And what retain? His intellect? What is it I must reverence duly? Poor intellect for worship, truly, Which tells me simply what was told (If mere morality, bereft Of the God in Christ, be all that's left) Elsewhere by voices manifold; With this advantage, that the stater Made nowise the important stumble Of adding, he, the sage and humble, Was also one with the Creator. You urge Christ's followers' simplicity: But how does shifting blame evade it? Have wisdom's words no more felicity? The stumbling-block, His speech—who laid it? How comes it that for one found able. To sift the truth of it from fable, Millions believe it to the letter? Christ's goodness, then—does that fare better? Strange goodness, which upon the score Of being goodness, the mere due

Of man to fellow-man, much more To God,—should take another view Of its possessor's privilege, And bid him rule his race! You pledge Your fealty to such rule? What, all— From Heavenly John and Attic Paul. And that brave weather-battered Peter Whose stout faith only stood completer For buffets, sinning to be pardoned, As the more his hands hauled nets, they hardened,— All, down to you, the man of men, Professing here at Göttingen, Compose Christ's flock! So you and I Are sheep of a good man! and why? The goodness,—how did he acquire it? Was it self-gained, did God inspire it? Choose which; then tell me, on what ground Should its possessor dare propound His claim to rise o'er us an inch? Were goodness all some man's invention. Who arbitrarily made mention What we should follow, and where flinch.— What qualities might take the style Of right and wrong, -and had such guessing Met with as general acquiescing As graced the Alphabet erewhile, When A got leave an Ox to be, No Camel (quoth the Jews) like G,— For thus inventing thing and title Worship were that man's fit requital. But if the common conscience must Be ultimately judge, adjust Its apt name to each quality Already known,—I would decree Worship for such mere demonstration And simple work of nomenclature, Only the day I praised, not Nature, But Harvey, for the circulation. I would praise such a Christ, with pride And joy, that he, as none beside, Had taught us how to keep the mind God gave him, as God gave his kind, Freer than they from fleshly taint! I would call such a Christ our Saint, As I declare our Poet, him Whose insight makes all others dim: A thousand poets pried at life, And only one amid the strife

Rose to be Shakespeare! Each shall take His crown, I'd say, for the world's sake— Though some objected—"Had we seen "The heart and head of each, what screen "Was broken there to give them light, "While in ourselves it shuts the sight, "We should no more admire, perchance, "That these found truth out at a glance, "Than marvel how the bat discerns "Some pitch-dark cavern's fifty turns, "Led by a finer tact, a gift "He boasts, which other birds must shift "Without, and grope as best they can." No, freely I would praise the man,-Nor one whit more, if he contended That gift of his, from God, descended. Ah, friend, what gift of man's does not? No nearer Something, by a jot, Rise an infinity of Nothings Than one: take Euclid for your teacher: Distinguish kinds: do crownings, clothings, Make that Creator which was creature? Multiply gifts upon his head, And what, when all's done, shall be said But . . . the more gifted he, I ween! That one's made Christ, another, Pilate, And This might be all That has been,— So what is there to frown or smile at? What is left for us, save, in growth Of soul, to rise up, far past both, From the gift looking to the Giver, And from the cistern to the River, And from the finite to Infinity, And from man's dust to God's divinity?

XVII.

Take all in a word: the Truth in God's breast Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed: Though He is so bright and we so dim, We are made in His image to witness Him: And were no eye in us to tell, Instructed by no inner sense, The light of Heaven from the dark of Hell, That light would want its evidence,—Though Justice, Good and Truth were still Divine, if, by some demon's will,

Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed Law through the worlds, and Right misnamed. No mere exposition of morality Made or in part or in totality, Should win you to give it worship, therefore: And, if no better proof you will care for, -Whom do you count the worst man upon earth? Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more Of what Right is, than arrives at birth In the best man's acts that we bow before: This last knows better—true; but my fact is, 'Tis one thing to know, and another to practise; And thence I conclude that the real God-function Is to furnish a motive and injunction For practising what we know already. And such an injunction and such a motive As the God in Christ, do you waive, and "heady High-minded," hang your tablet-votive Outside the fane on a finger-post? Morality to the uttermost, Supreme in Christ as we all confess, Why need we prove would avail no jot To make Him God, if God He were not? What is the point where Himself lays stress? Does the precept run "Believe in Good, "In Justice, Truth, now understood "For the first time?"—or, "Believe in ME. "Who lived and died, yet essentially "Am Lord of Life?" Whoever can take The same to his heart and for mere love's sake Conceive of the love,—that man obtains A new truth; no conviction gains Of an old one only, made intense By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

XVIII.

Can it be that He stays inside?
Is the Vesture left me to commune with?
Could my soul find aught to sing in tune with
Even at this lecture, if she tried?
Oh, let me at lowest sympathise
With the lurking drop of blood that lies
In the desiccated brain's white roots
Without a throb for Christ's attributes,
As the Lecturer makes his special boast!
If love's dead there, it has left a ghost.

Admire we, how from heart to brain (Though to say so strike the doctors dumb) One instinct rises and falls again, Restoring the equilibrium. And how when the Critic had done his best, And the Pearl of Price, at reason's test, Lay dust and ashes levigable On the Professor's lecture-table; When we looked for the inference and monition That our faith, reduced to such a condition, Be swept forthwith to its natural dust-hole,— He bids us, when we least expect it, Take back our faith,—if it be not just whole, Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect it, Which fact pays the damage done rewardingly, So, prize we our dust and ashes accordingly! "Go home and venerate the Myth "I thus have experimented with-"This Man, continue to adore him "Rather than all who went before him, "And all who ever followed after!"— Surely for this I may praise you, my brother! Will you take the praise in tears or laughter? That's one point gained: can I compass another? Unlearned love was safe from spurning— Can't we respect your loveless learning? Let us at least give Learning honor! What laurels had we showered upon her, Girding her loins up to perturb Our theory of the Middle Verb; Or Turklike brandishing a scimitar O'er anapæsts in comic-trimeter; Or curing the halt and maimed Iketides, While we lounged on at our indebted ease: Instead of which, a tricksy demon Sets her at Titus or Philemon! When Ignorance wags his ears of leather And hates God's word, 'tis altogether; Nor leaves he his congenial thistles To go and browse on Paul's Epistles. -And you, the audience, who might ravage The world wide, enviably savage Nor heed the cry of the retriever, More than Herr Heine (before his fever),— I do not tell a lie so arrant As say my passion's wings are furled up, And, without the plainest Heavenly warrant, I were ready and glad to give this world upBut still, when you rub the brow meticulous, And ponder the profit of turning holy
If not for God's, for your own sake solely,
—God for bid Ishould find you ridiculous!
Deduce from this lecture all that eases you,
Nay, call yourselves, if the calling pleases you,
"Christians,"—abhor the Deist's pravity,—
Go on, you shall no more move my gravity,
Than, when I see boys ride a-cockhorse
I find it in my heart to embarrass them
By hinting that their stick's a mock horse,
And they really carry what they say carries them.

XIX.

So sate I talking with my mind. I did not long to leave the door And find a new church, as before, But rather was quiet and inclined To prolong and enjoy the gentle resting From further tracking and trying and testing. This tolerance is a genial mood! (Said I, and a little pause ensued). One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and shelf, And sees, each side, the good effects of it, A value for religion's self, A carelessness about the sects of it. Let me enjoy my own conviction, Not watch my neighbour's faith with fretfulness! Still spying there some dereliction Of truth, perversity, forgetfulness! Better a mild indifferentism, To teach that all our faiths (though duller His shines through a dull spirit's prism) Originally had one colour— Sending me on a pilgrimage Through ancient and through modern times To many peoples, various climes, Where I may see Saint, Savage, Sage Fuse their respective creeds in one Before the general Father's throne!

XX.

... 'Twas the horrible storm began afresh! The black night caught me in his mesh, Whirled me up, and flung me prone.

I was left on the college-step alone.

I looked, and far there, ever fleeting Far, far away, the receding gesture, And looming of the lessening Vesture, Swept forward from my stupid hand, While I watched my foolish heart expand In the lazy glow of benevolence. O'er the various modes of man's belief. I sprang up with fear's vehemence. —Needs must there be one way, our chief Best way of worship: let me strive To find it, and when found, contrive My fellows also take their share. This constitutes my earthly care: God's is above it, and distinct! For I, a man, with men am linked, And not a brute with brutes; no gain That I experience, must remain Unshared; but should my best endeavour To share it, fail—subsisteth ever God's care above, and I exult That God, by God's own ways occult, May—doth, I will believe—bring back All wanderers to a single track! Meantime, I can but testify God's care for me—no more, can I— It is but for myself I know. The world rolls witnessing around me Only to leave me as it found me; Men cry there but my ear is slow. Their races flourish or decay -What boots it, while you lucid way Loaded with stars, divides the vault? How soon my soul repairs its fault When, sharpening senses' hebetude, She turns on my own life! So viewed, No mere mote's-breadth but teems immense With witnessings of providence: And woe to me if when I look Upon that record, the sole book Unsealed to me, I take no heed Of any warning that I read! Have I been sure, this Christmas-Eve, God's own hand did the rainbow weave, Whereby the truth from heaven slid Into my soul ?-- I cannot bid The world admit He stooped to heal My soul, as if in a thunder-peal Where one heard noise, and one saw flame,

I only knew He named my name. And what is the world to me, for sorrow Or joy in its censures, when to-morrow It drops the remark, with just-turned head Then, on again—That man is dead? Yes,—but for me—my name called,—drawn As a conscript's lot from the lap's black yawn, He has dipt into on a battle-dawn: Bid out of life by a nod, a glance,— Stumbling, mute-mazed, at nature's chance,— With a rapid finger circled round, Fixed to the first poor inch of ground, To fight from, where his foot was found; Whose ear but a minute since lay free To the wide camp's buzz and gossipry— Summoned, a solitary man, To end his life where his life began, From the safe glad rear, to the dreadful van! Soul of mine, hadst thou caught and held By the hem of the Vesture . . .

XXI.

And I caught
At the flying Robe, and unrepelled
Was lapped again in its folds full-fraught
With warmth and wonder and delight,
God's mercy being infinite.
And scarce had the words escaped my tongue,
When, at a passionate bound, I sprung
Out of the wandering world of rain,
Into the little chapel again.

XXII.

How else was I found there, bolt upright On my bench, as if I had never left it?

—Never flung out on the common at night Nor met the storm and wedge-like cleft it, Seen the rarce-show of Peter's successor, Or the laboratory of the Professor! For the Vision, that was true, I wist, True as that heaven and earth exist. There sate my friend, the yellow and tall, With his neck and its wen in the selfsame place; Yet my nearest neighbour's cheek showed gall, She had slid away a contemptuous space:

And the old fat woman, late so placable, Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mistakeable, Of her milk of kindness turning rancid: In short a spectator might have fancied That I had nodded betrayed by a slumber, Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly, Through the heads of the sermon, nine in number, To wake up now at the tenth and lastly. But again, could such a disgrace have happened? Each friend at my elbow had surely nudged it: And, as for the sermon, where did my nap end? Unless I heard it, could I have judged it? Could I report as I do at the close, First, the preacher speaks through his nose: Second, his gesture is too emphatic: Thirdly, to waive what's pedagogic, The subject-matter itself lacks logic: Fourthly, the English is ungrammatic. Great news! the preacher is found no Pascal, Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task call Of making square to a finite eye The circle of infinity, And find so all-but-just-succeeding! Great news! the sermon proves no reading Where bee-like in the flowers I may bury me, Like Taylor's, the immortal Jeremy! And now that I know the very worst of him, What was it I thought to obtain at first of him? Ha! Is God mocked, as He asks? Shall I take on me to change His tasks, And dare, despatched to a river-head For a simple draught of the element, Neglect the thing for which He sent, And return with another thing instead?— Saying . . . "Because the water found "Welling up from underground, "Is mingled with the taints of earth, "While Thou, I know, dost laugh at dearth, "And couldest, at a word, convulse "The world with the leap of its river-pulse,— "Therefore I turned from the oozings muddy, "And bring thee a chalice I found, instead: "See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy! "One would suppose that the marble bled. "What matters the water? A hope I have nursed, "That the waterless cup will quench my thirst." —Better have knelt at the poorest stream That trickles in pain from the straitest rift!

For the less or the more is all God's gift, Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam. And here, is there water or not, to drink? I, then, in ignofance and weakness, Taking God's help, have attained to think My heart does best to receive in meekness This mode of worship, as most to His mind Where earthly aids being cast behind, His All in All appears serene, With the thinest human veil between. Letting the mystic Lamps, the Seven, The many motions of His spirit, Pass, as they list, to earth from Heaven. For the preacher's merit or demerit, It were to be wished the flaws were fewer In the earthen vessel, holding treasure. Which lies as safe in a golden ewer; But the main thing is, does it hold good measure? Heaven soon sets right all other matters!— Ask, else, these ruins of humanity, This flesh worn out to rags and tatters, This soul at struggle with insanity, Who thence take comfort, can I doubt, Which an empire gained, were a loss without. May it be mine! And let us hope That no worse blessing befal the Pope, Turn'd sick at last of the day's buffoonery, Of his posturings and his petticoatings, Beside the Bourbon bully's gloatings In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery! Nor may the Professor forego its peace At Göttingen, presently, when, in the dusk Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should increase, Prophesied of by that horrible husk; And when, thicker and thicker, the darkness fills The world through his misty spectacles, And he gropes for something more substantial Than a fable, myth, or personification, May Christ do for him, what no mere man shall, And stand confessed as the God of salvation! Meantime, in the still recurring fear Lest myself, at unawares, be found, While attacking the choice of my neighbours round, Without my own made—I choose here! The giving out of the hymn reclaims me; I have done!—And if any blames me, Thinking that merely to touch in brevity The topics I dwell on, were unlawful,—

Or, worse, that I trench, with undue levity,
On the bounds of the Holy and the awful,
I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,
And refer myself to THEE, instead of him;
Who head and heart alike discernest,
Looking below light speech we utter,
When the frothy spume and frequent sputter
Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest!
May the truth shine out, stand ever before us!
I put up pencil and join chorus
To Hepzibah Tune, without further apology,
The last five verses of the third section
Of the seventeenth hymn in Whitfield's Collection
To conclude with the doxology.

EASTER-DAY.

1.

How very hard it is to be A Christian! Hard for you and me, -Not the mere task of making real That duty up to its ideal, Effecting thus, complete and whole, A purpose of the human soul— For that is always hard to do; But hard, I mean, for me and you To realise it, more or less, With even the moderate success Which commonly repays our strife To carry out the aims of life. "This aim is greater," you may say, "And so more arduous every way." -But the importance of the fruits Still proves to man, in all pursuits, Proportional encouragement. "Then, what if it be God's intent

"That labour to this one result
"Shall seem unduly difficult?"
—Ah, that's a question in the dark—
And the sole thing that I remark
Upon the difficulty, this:
We do not see it where it is,
At the beginning of the race;
As we proceed, it shifts its place,
And where we looked for palms to fall,
We find the tug's to come,—that's all.

II. At first you say, "The whole, or chief "Of difficulties, is Belief. "Could I believe once thoroughly, "The rest were simple. What? Am I "An idiot, do you think? A beast? " Prove to me only that the least "Command of God is God's indeed, "And what injunction shall I need "To pay obedience? Death so nigh "When time must end, eternity "Begin,-and cannot I compute? "Weigh loss and gain together? suit " My actions to the balance drawn, "And give my body to be sawn "Asunder, hacked in pieces, tied "To horses, stoned, burned, crucified, "Like any martyr of the list? "How gladly,-if I made acquist, "Through the brief minutes' fierce annoy, "Of God's eternity of joy."

III.

—And certainly you name the point
Whereon all turns: for could you joint
This flexile finite life once tight
Into the fixed and infinite,
You, safe inside, would spurn what's out,
With carelessness enough, no doubt—
Would spurn mere life: but where time brings
To their next stage your reasonings,
Your eyes, late wide, begin to wink
Nor see the path so well, I think.

IV.

You say, "Faith may be, one agrees, "A touchstone for God's purposes, "Even as ourselves conceive of them. "Could be acquit us or condemn " For holding what no hand can loose, "Rejecting when we can't but choose? "As well award the victor's wreath "To whosoever should take breath "Duly each minute while he lived-"Grant Heaven, because a man contrived "To see the sunlight every day "He walked forth on the public way. "You must mix some uncertainty "With faith, if you would have faith be. "Why, what but faith, do we abhor "And idolize each other for-"-Faith in our evil, or our good, "Which is or is not understood "Aright by those we love or those "We hate, thence called our friends or foes? "Your mistress saw your spirit's grace, "When, turning from the ugly face, "I found belief in it too hard; "And both of us have our reward. "-Yet here a doubt peeps: well for us "Weak beings, to go using thus "A touchstone for our little ends, "And try with faith the foes and friends; "-But God, bethink you! I would fain "Conceive of the Creator's reign

"Than creatures build by with applause. "In all God's acts—(as Plato cries

"He doth)—He should geometrise.

"Whence, I desiderate . . ."

"As based upon exacter laws

v.

I see!

You would grow smoothly as a tree, Soar heavenward, straightly up like fire— God bless you—there's your world entire Needing no faith, if you think fit; Go there, walk up and down in it! The whole creation travails, groans— Contrive your music from its moans, Without or let or hindrance, friend! That's an old story, and its end As old—you come back (be sincere) With every question you put here (Here where there once was, and is still, We think, a living oracle, Whose answers you stood carping at) This time flung back unanswered flat,-Besides, perhaps, as many more As those that drove you out before, Now added, where was little need! Questions impossible, indeed, To us who sate still, all and each Persuaded that our earth had speech Of God's, writ down, no matter if In cursive type or hieroglyph,-Which one fact frees us from the yoke Of guessing why He never spoke. You come back in no better plight Than when you left us,—am I right?

VI.

So the old process, I conclude, Goes on, the reasoning's pursued Further. You own, "Tis well averred, "A scientific faith's absurd, "-Frustrates the very end 'twas meant "To serve: so I would rest content "With a mere probability, "But, probable; the chance must lie "Clear on one side,-lie all in rough, "So long as there is just enough "To pin my faith to, though it hap "Only at points: from gap to gap "One hangs up a huge curtain so, "Grandly, nor seeks to have it go " Foldless and flat along the wall: "-What care I that some interval "Of life less plainly might depend "On God? I'd hang there to the end; "And thus I should not find it hard "To be a Christian and debarred " From trailing on the earth, till furled "Away by death!—Renounce the world? "Were that a mighty hardship? " A pleasant life, and straight some man

- "Beside you, with, if he thought fit.
- "Abundant means to compass it,
- "Shall turn deliberate aside
- "To try and live as, if you tried
- "You clearly might, yet most despise. "One friend of mine wears out his eyes,
- "Slighting the stupid joys of sense,
- "In patient hope that, ten years hence,
- "Somewhat completer, he may see
- "His list of lepidopteræ:
- "While just the other who most laughs
- "At him, above all epitaphs
- "Aspires to have his tomb describe
- "Himself as Sole among the tribe
- "Of snuff-box-fanciers, who possessed
- "A Grignon with the Regent's crest.
- "So that, subduing as you want,
- "Whatever stands predominant
- "Among my earthly appetites
- "For tastes, and smells, and sounds, and sights,
- "I shall be doing that alone,
- "To gain a palm-branch and a throne,
- "Which fifty people undertake
- "To do, and gladly, for the sake
- "Of giving a Semitic guess,
- "Or playing pawns at blindfold chess.

VII.

Good! and the next thing is,—look round For evidence enough. 'Tis found, No doubt: as is your sort of mind, So is your sort of search—you'll find What you desire, and that's to be A Christian: what says History? How comforting a point it were To find some mummy-scrap declare There lived a Moses! Better still, Prove Jonah's whale translatable Into some quicksand of the seas, Isle, cavern, rock, or what you please, That Faith might clap her wings and crow From such an eminence! Or, no-The Human Heart's best; you prefer Making that prove the minister To truth; you probe its wants and needs And hopes and fears, then try what creeds

Meet these most aptly,—resolute That Faith plucks such substantial fruit Wherever these two correspond, She little needs to look beyond, To puzzle out what Orpheus was, Or Dionysius Zagrias. You'll find sufficient, as I say, To satisfy you either way. You wanted to believe; your pains Are crowned—you do: and what remains? Renounce the world!—Ah, were it done By merely cutting one by one Your limbs off, with your wise head last, How easy were it!—how soon past, If once in the believing mood! Such is man's usual gratitude, Such thanks to God do we return. For not exacting that we spurn A single gift of life, forego One real gain,—only taste them so With gravity and temperance, That those mild virtues may enhance Such pleasures, rather than abstract— Last spice of which, will be the fact Of love discerned in every gift; While, when the scene of life shall shift, And the gay heart be taught to ache, As sorrows and privations take The place of joy,—the thing that seems Mere misery, under human schemes, Becomes, regarded by the light Of Love, as very near, or quite As good a gift as joy before. So plain is it that all the more God's dispensations merciful, More pettishly we try and cull Briars, thistles, from our private plot. To mar God's ground where thorns are not!

VIII.

Do you say this, or I?—Oh, you! Then, what, my friend,—(so I pursue Our parley)—you indeed opine That the Eternal and Divine Did, eighteen centuries ago, In very truth Enough! you know

The all-stupendous tale,—that Birth, That Life, that Death! And all, the earth Shuddered at,-all, the heavens grew black Rather than see; all, Nature's rack And three at dissolution's brink Attested,—it took place, you think, Only to give our joys a zest, And prove our sorrows for the best? We differ, then! Were I, still pale And heartstruck at the dreadful tale. Waiting to hear God's voice declare What horror followed for my share, As implicated in the deed, Apart from other sins,—concede That if He blacked out in a blot My brief life's pleasantness, 'twere not So very disproportionate! Or there might be another fate— I certainly could understand (If fancies were the thing in hand) How God might save, at that Day's price, The impure in their impurities, Leave formal licence and complete To choose the fair, and pick the sweet. But there be certain words, broad, plain, Uttered again and yet again, Hard to mistake, to overgloss— Announcing this world's gain for loss, And bidding us reject the same: The whole world lieth (they proclaim) In wickedness,—come out of it!— Turn a deaf ear, if you think fit, But I who thrill through every nerve At thought of what deaf ears deserve,— How do you counsel in the case?

IX.

- "I'd take, by all means, in your place, "The safe side, since it so appears:
- "Deny myself, a few brief years,
- "The natural pleasure, leave the fruit
- "Or cut the plant up by the root.
- "Remember what a martyr said
- "On the rude tablet overhead—
- "'I was born sickly, poor and mean,
- "'A slave: no misery could screen
- "'The holders of the pearl of price

"'From Cæsar's envy; therefore twice

"'I fought with beasts, and three times saw

"' My children suffer by his law-

"' At last my own release was earned:

"'I was some time in being burned,

" 'But at the close a Hand came through

"' The fire above my head, and drew

"' My soul to Christ, whom now I see.

"' Sergius, a brother, writes for me

"'This testimony on the wall-

"'For me, I have forgot it all.'

"You say right; this were not so hard!

"And since one nowise is debarred

"From this, why not escape some sins

"By such a method?"

x.

—Then begins

To the old point, revulsion new— (For 'tis just this, I bring you to) If after all we should mistake, And so renounce life for the sake Of death and nothing else? You hear Our friends we jeered at, send the jeer Back to ourselves with good effect-'There were my beetles to collect!' 'My box—a trifle, I confess, 'But here I hold it, ne'ertheless!' Poor idiots, (let us pluck up heart And answer) we, the better part Have chosen, though 'twere only hope,-Nor envy moles like you that grope! Amid your veritable muck, More than the grasshoppers would truck, For yours, their passionate life away, That spends itself in leaps all day To reach the sun, you want the eyes To see, as they the wings to rise And match the noble hearts of them! So, the contemner we contemn,--And, when doubt strikes us, so, we ward Its stroke off, caught upon our g'uard, —Not struck enough to overturn' Our faith, but shake it—make us learn What I began with, and, I wis, End, having proved,—how hard it is To be a Christian !

XI.

"Proved, or not,

"Howe'er you wis, small thanks, I wot,

"You get of mine, for taking pains

"To make it hard to me. Who gains

"By that, I wonder? Here I live" In trusting ease; and do you drive

"At causing me to lose what most

"Yourself would mourn for when 'twas lost?"

XII.

But, do you see, my friend, that thus You leave St. Paul for Æschylus?—
—Who made his Titan's arch-device The giving men blind hopes to spice The meal of life with, else devoured In bitter haste, while lo! Death loured Before them at the platter's edge! If faith should be, as we allege, Quite other than a condiment To heighten flavors with, or meant (Like that brave curry of his Grace) To take at need the victuals' place? If having dined you would digest Besides, and turning to your rest Should find instead . . .

XIII.

Now, you shall see

And judge if a mere foppery
Pricks on my speaking! I resolve
To utter . . . yes, it shall devolve
On you to hear as solemn, strange
And dread a thing as in the range
Of facts,—or fancies, if God will—
E'er happened to our kind! I still
Stand in the cloud, and while it wraps
My face, ought not to speak, perhaps;
Seeing that as I carry through
My purpose, if my words in you
Find veritable listeners,
My story, reason's self avers
Must needs be false—the happy chance!
While, if each human countenance

I meet in London streets all day, Be what I fear,—my warnings fray No one, and no one they convert, And no one helps me to assert How hard it is to really be A Christian, and in vacancy I pour this story!

XIV.

I commence By trying to inform you, whence It comes that every Easter-night As now, I sit up, watch, till light Shall break, those chimney-stacks and roofs Give, through my window-pane, grey proofs That Easter-day is breaking slow. On such a night, three years ago, It chanced that I had cause to cross The common, where the chapel was, Our friend spoke of, the other day-You've not forgotten, I dare say. I fell to musing of the time So close, the blessed matin-prime All hearts leap up at, in some guise— One could not well do otherwise. Insensibly my thoughts were bent Toward the main point; I overwent Much the same ground of reasoning As you and I just now: one thing Remained, however—one that tasked My soul to answer; and I asked, Fairly and frankly, what might be That History, that Faith, to me-—Me there—not me, in some domain Built up and peopled by my brain, Weighing its merits as one weighs Mere theories for blame or praise, —The Kingcraft of the Lucumons, Or Fourier's scheme, its pros and cons,— But as my faith, or none at all. 'How were my case, now, should I fall 'Dead here, this minute—do I lie 'Faithful or faithless?'—Note that I Inclined thus ever !—little, prone, For instance, when I slept alone In childhood, to go calm to sleep And leave a closet where might keep

His watch perdue some murderer Waiting till twelve o'clock to stir, As good, authentic legends tell He might—'But how improbable! 'How little likely to deserve 'The pains and trial to the nerve 'Of thrusting head into the dark,'— Urged my old nurse, and bade me mark Besides, that, should the dreadful scout Really lie hid there, to leap out At first turn of the rusty key, It were small gain that she could see In being killed upon the floor And losing one night's sleep the more. I tell you, I would always burst The door ope, know my fate at first.-This time, indeed, the closet penned No such assassin: but a friend Rather, peeped out to guard me, fit For counsel, Common Sense, to-wit, Who said a good deal that might pass,— Heartening, impartial too, it was, Judge else: 'For, soberly now,—who 'Should be a Christian if not you?' (Hear how he smoothed me down.) 'One takes A whole life, sees what course it makes 'Mainly, and not by fits and starts— 'In spite of stoppage which imparts 'Fresh value to the general speed: 'A life, with none, would fly indeed: 'Your progressing is slower—right! 'We deal with progressing, not flight. 'Through baffling senses passionate, 'Fancies as restless,—with a freight 'Of knowledge cumbersome enough 'To sink your ship when waves grow rough, 'Not serve as ballast in the hold, 'I find, 'mid dangers manifold, 'The good bark answers to the helm 'Where Faith sits, easier to o'erwhelm 'Than some stout peasant's heavenly guide, 'Whose hard head could not, if it tried, 'Conceive a doubt, or understand 'How senses hornier than his hand 'Should 'tice the Christian off his guard-'More happy! But shall we award 'Less honor to the hull, which, dogged

By storms, a mere wreck, waterlogged,

```
'Masts by the board, and bulwarks gone,
'And stanchions going, yet bears on,-
'Than to mere life-boats, built to save,
'And triumph o'er the breaking wave?
'Make perfect your good ship as these,
'And what were her performances!'
I added—'Would the ship reached home!
"I wish indeed "God's kingdom come—"
'The day when I shall see appear
'His bidding, as my duty, clear
'From doubt! And it shall dawn, that day,
'Some future season; Easter may
'Prove, not impossibly, the time—
'Yes, that were striking—fates would chime
'So aptly! Easter-morn, to bring
'The Judgment!—deeper in the Spring
'Than now, however, when there's snow
'Capping the hills; for earth must show
'All signs of meaning to pursue
'Her tasks as she was wont to do—
'-The lark, as taken by surprise
'As we ourselves, shall recognise
'Sudden the end: for suddenly
'It comes—the dreadfulness must be
'In that—all warrants the belief—
"" At night it cometh like a thief."
'I fancy why the trumpet blows;
'-Plainly, to wake one. From repose
'We shall start up, at last awake
'From life, that insane dream we take
'For waking now, because it seems.
'And as, when now we wake from dreams,
'We say, while we recall them, "Fool,
"To let the chance slip, linger cool
"" When such adventure offered!
"A bridge to cross, a dwarf to thrust
"Aside, a wicked mage to stab-
"And, lo ye, I had kissed Queen Mab,"-
'So shall we marvel why we grudged
'Our labours here, and idly judged
'Of Heaven, we might have gained, but lose!
'Lose? Talk of loss, and I refuse
'To plead at all! I speak no worse
'Nor better than my ancient nurse
'When she would tell me in my youth
'I well deserved that shapes uncouth
'Should fright and tease me in my sleep-
'Why did I not in memory keep
```

'Her precept for the evil's cure?
'"Pinch your own arm, boy, and be sure
"You'll wake forthwith!"'

xv.

And as I said This nonsense, throwing back my head With light complacent laugh, I found Suddenly all the midnight round The dome of Heaven had stood One fire. As made up of a multitude Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack Of ripples infinite and black, From sky to sky. Sudden there went, Like horror and astonishment, A fierce vindictive scribble of red Quick flame across, as if one said (The angry scribe of Judgment) 'There— 'Burn it!' And straight I was aware That the whole ribwork round, minute Cloud touching cloud beyond compute, Was tinted each with its own spot Of burning at the core, till clot Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire Over all heaven, which 'gan suspire As fanned to measure equable.— As when great conflagrations kill Night overhead, and rise and sink, Reflected. Now the fire would shrink And wither off the blasted face Of heaven, and I distinct could trace The sharp black ridgy outlines left Unburned like network—then, each cleft The fire had been sucked back into. Regorged, and out it surging flew Furiously, and night writhed inflamed, Till, tolerating to be tamed No longer, certain rays world-wide Shot downwardly, on every side, Caught past escape; the earth was lit; As if a dragon's nostril split And all his famished ire o'erflowed; Then, as he winced at his Lord's goad, Back he inhaled: whereat I found The clouds into vast pillars bound, Based on the corners of the earth, Propping the skies at top: a dearth

Of fire i' the violet intervals, Leaving exposed the utmost walls Of time, about to tumble in And end the world.

XVI.

I felt begin The Judgment-Day: to retrocede Was too late now.—'In very deed, (I uttered to myself) 'that Day!' The intuition burned away All darkness from my spirit too-There, stood I, found and fixed, I knew, Choosing the world. The choice was made— And naked and disguiseless stayed, And unevadeable, the fact. My brain held ne'ertheless compact Its senses, nor my heart declined Its office—rather, both combined To help me in this juncture—I Lost not a second,—agony Gave boldness: there, my life had end And my choice with it—best defend, Applaud them! I resolved to say, 'So was I framed by Thee, this way 'I put to use Thy senses here! 'It was so beautiful, so near, 'Thy world,—what could I do but choose 'My part there? Nor did I refuse 'To look above the transient boon 'In time—but it was hard so soon 'As in a sl ort life, to give up 'Such beauty: I had put the cup 'Undrained of half its fulness, by; 'But, to renounce it utterly, '—That was too hard! Nor did the Cry 'Which bade renounce it, touch my brain 'Authentically deep and plain 'Enough, to make my lips let go. 'But Thou, who knowest all, dost know 'Whether I was not, life's brief while, 'Endeavouring to reconcile 'Those lips-too tardily, alas! 'To letting the dear remnant pass, 'One day,—some drops of earthly good 'Untasted! Is it for this mood, 'That Thou, whose earth delights so well,

'Hast made its complement a Hell?'

XVII.

A final belch of fire like blood,
Overbroke all, next, in one flood
Of doom. Then fire was sky, and sky
Was fire, and both, one extasy,
Then ashes. But I heard no noise
(Whatever was) because a Voice
Beside me spoke thus, "All is done,
"Time ends, Eternity's begun,
"And thou art judged for evermore!"

XVIII.

I looked up; all was as before; Of that cloud-Tophet overhead, No trace was left: I saw instead The common round me, and the sky Above, stretched drear and emptily Of life: 'twas the last watch of night, Except what brings the morning quite, When the armed angel, conscience-clear, His task nigh done, leans o'er his spear And gazes on the earth he guards, Safe one night more through all its wards, Till God relieve him at his post. 'A dream—a waking dream at most! (I spoke out quick that I might shake The horrid nightmare off, and wake.) 'The world's gone, yet the world is here? 'Are not all things as they appear? 'Is Judgment past for me alone? '—And where had place the Great White Throne? 'The rising of the Quick and Dead? 'Where stood they, small and great? Who read 'The sentence from the Opened Book?' So, by degrees, the blood forsook My heart, and let it beat afresh; I knew I should break through the mesh Of horror, and breathe presently— When, lo, again, the Voice by me!

XIX.

I saw . . . Oh, brother, 'mid far sands The palm-tree-cinetured city stands,— Bright-white beneath, as Heaven, bright-blue, Above it, while the years pursue Their course, unable to abate Its paradisal laugh at fate: One morn,—the Arab staggers blind O'er a new tract of death, calcined To ashes, silence, nothingness,— Striving, with dizzy wits, to guess Whence fell the blow: what if, 'twixt skies And prostrate earth, he should surprise The imaged Vapour, head to foot, Surveying, motionless and mute, Its work, ere, in a whirlwind rapt, It vanish up again?—So hapt My chance. He stood there. Like the smoke Pillared o'er Sodom, when day broke,-I saw Him. One magnific pall Mantled in massive fold and fall His Dread, and coiled in snaky swathes About His feet: night's black, that bathes All else, broke, grizzled with despair, Against the soul of blackness there. A gesture told the mood within— That wrapped right hand which based the chin,-That intense meditation fixed On His procedure,—pity mixed With the fulfilment of decree. Motionless, thus, He spoke to me, Who fell before His feet, a mass, No man now.

XX.

"All is come to pass. "Such shows are over for each soul "They had respect to. In the roll "Of Judgment which convinced mankind "Of sin, stood many, bold and blind, "Terror must burn the truth into: "Their fate for them !--thou hadst to do "With absolute omnipotence, "Able its judgments to dispense "To the whole race, as every one "Were its sole object: that is done: "God is, thou art,—the rest is hurled "To nothingness for thee. This world, "This finite life, thou hast preferred, " In disbelief of God's own word, "To Heaven and to Infinity. "Here, the probation was for thee,

- "To show thy soul the earthly mixed
- "With Heavenly, it must choose betwixt.
- "The earthly joys lay palpable,—"A taint, in each, distinct as well;
- "The Heavenly flitted, faint and rare,
- "Above them, but as truly were
- "Taintless, so in their nature, best.
- "Thy choice was earth: thou didst attest
- "'Twas fitter spirit should subserve
- "The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve
- "Beneath the spirit's play. Advance
- "No claim to their inheritance
- "Who chose the spirit's fugitive
- "Brief gleams, and thought, 'This were to live
- "'Indeed, if rays, completely pure
- "'From flesh that dulls them, should endure,-
- "' Not shoot in meteor-light athwart
- "'Our earth, to show how cold and swart
- "'It lies beneath their fire, but stand
- "' As stars should, destined to expand,
- "' Prove veritable worlds, our home!"
 "Thou saidst,—'Let Spirit star the dome
- "'Of sky, that flesh may miss no peak,
- "' No nook of earth,—I shall not seek
- "' Its service further!' Thou art shut
- "Out of the Heaven of Spirit; glut
- "Thy sense upon the world: 'tis thine
- 'For ever-take it!"

XXI.

'How? Is mine,

- 'The world?' (I cried, while my soul broke Out in a transport.) 'Hast thou spoke
- 'Plainly in that? Earth's exquisite
- 'Treasures of wonder and delight,
- 'For me?'

XXII.

The austere Voice returned,—

"So soon made happy? Hadst thou learned

"What God accounteth happiness,

- "Thou wouldst not find it hard to guess
- "What Hell may be His punishment "For those who doubt if God invent
- "Better than they. Let such men rest
- "Content with what they judged the best.

- "Let the Unjust usurp at will:
- "The Filthy shall be nilthy still:
- "Miser, there waits the gold for thee!
- "Hater, indulge thine enmity!
- "And thou, whose heaven, self-ordained,
- "Was to enjoy earth unrestrained,
- "Do it! Take all the ancient show!
- "The woods shall wave, the rivers flow,
- "And men apparently pursue
- "Their works, as they were wont to do,
- "While living in probation yet:
- "I promise not thou shalt forget
- "The past, now gone to its account,
- "But leave thee with the old amount
- "Of faculties, nor less nor more,
- "Unvisited, as heretofore,
- "By God's free spirit, that makes an end.
- "So, once more, take thy world; expend
- "Eternity upon its shows,-
- "Flung thee as freely as one rose
- "Out of a summer's opulence,
- "Over the Eden-barrier whence
- "Thou art excluded. Knock in vain!"

XXIII.

I sate up. All was still again.
I breathed free: to my heart, back fled
The warmth. 'But, all the world!' (I said)
I stooped and picked a leaf of fern,
And recollected I might learn
From books, how many myriad sorts
Exist, if one may trust reports,
Each as distinct and beautiful
As this, the very first I cull.
Think, from the first leaf to the last!
Conceive, then, earth's resources! Vast
Exhaustless beauty, endless change
Of wonder; and this foot shall range
Alps, Andes,—and this eye devour
The bee-bird and the aloe-flower?

XXIV.

And the Voice, "Welcome so to rate

- "The arras-folds that variegate
- "The earth, God's antechamber, well!
- "The wise, who waited there, could tell

- "By these, what royalties in store
- "Lay one step past the entrance-door.
- " For whom, was reckoned, not too much,
- "This life's munificence? For such
- "As thou,-a race, whereof not one
- "Was able, in a million,
- "To feel that any marvel lay
- "In objects round his feet all day;
- "Nor one, in many millions more,
- "Willing, if able, to explore
- "The secreter, minuter charm!
- "—Brave souls, a fern-leaf could disarm
- "Of power to cope with God's intent,—
 "Or scared if the South Firmament
- "With North-fire did its wings refledge!
- "All partial beauty was a pledge
- "Of beauty in its plenitude:
- "But since the pledge sufficed thy mood,
- "Retain it—plenitude be theirs
- "Who looked above!"

XXV.

Though sharp despairs

Shot through me, I held up, bore on.

- 'What is it though my trust is gone
- 'From natural things? Henceforth my part
- 'Be less with Nature than with Art!
- For Art supplants, gives mainly worthTo Nature; 'tis Man stamps the earth—
- 'And I will seek his impress, seek
- 'The statuary of the Greek,
- 'Italy's painting—there my choice
- 'Shall fix!'

XXVI.

- "Obtain it," said the Voice.
- "The one form with its single act,
- "Which sculptors laboured to abstract,
- "The one face, painters tried to draw,
- "With its one look, from throngs they saw i
- "And that perfection in their soul,
- "These only hinted at? The whole,
 "They were but parts of? What each laid
- "His claim to glory on ?-afraid
- "His fellow-men should give him rank
- "By the poor tentatives he shrank

```
"Smitten at heart from, all the more,
"That gazers pressed in to adore!
"'Shall I be judged by only these?'
"If such his soul's capacities,
"Even while he trod the earth,—think, now
"What pomp in Buonarotti's brow,
"With its new palace-brain where dwells
"Superb the soul, unvexed by cells
"That crumbled with the transient clay!
"What visions will his right hand's sway
"Still turn to form, as still they burst
"Upon him? How will he quench thirst
"Titanically infantine,
"Laid at the breast of the Divine?
"Does it confound thee,—this first page
"Emblazoning man's heritage?-
"Can this alone absorb thy sight,
"As if they were not infinite,-
"Like the omnipotence which tasks
"Itself, to furnish all that asks
"The soul it means to satiate?
"What was the world, the starry state
"Of the broad skies, -what, all displays
"Of power and beauty intermixed,
"Which now thy soul is chained betwixt,-
"What, else, than needful furniture
"For life's first stage? God's work, be sure,
"No more spreads wasted, than falls scant:
"He filled, did not exceed, Man's want
"Of beauty in this life.
                         And pass
"Life's line, -and what has earth to do,
"Its utmost beauty's appanage,
"With the requirements of next stage?
"Did God pronounce earth 'very good'?
"Needs must it be, while understood
"For man's preparatory state;
"Nothing to heighten nor abate:
"But transfer the completeness here,
"To serve a new state's use,—and drear
"Deficiency gapes every side!
"The good, tried once, were bad, retried.
"See the enwrapping rocky niche,
"Sufficient for the sleep, in which
"The lizard breathes for ages safe:
"Split the mould—and as this would chafe
```

"The creature's new world-widened sense,
"One minute after you dispense
"The thousand sounds and sights that broke

- "In, on him, at the chisel's stroke,—
- "So, in God's eyes, the earth's first stuff
- "Was, neither more nor less, enough
- "To house man's soul, man's need fulfil.
- "You reckoned it immeasurable: "So thinks the lizard of his vault!
- "Could God be taken in default,
- "Short of contrivances, by you,—
- "Or reached, ere ready to pursue
- "His progress through eternity?
- "That chambered rock, the lizard's world,
- "Your easy mallet's blow has hurled
- "To nothingness for ever; so,
- "Has God abolished at a blow
- "This world, wherein his saints were pent,-
- "Who, though, found grateful and content,
- "With the provision there, as thou,
- "Yet knew He would not disallow
- "Their spirits' hunger, felt as well,-
- "Unsated,—not unsatable,
- "As Paradise gives proof. Deride
- "Their choice now, thou who sit'st outside!"

XXVII.

I cried in anguish, 'Mind, the mind, 'So miserably cast behind, 'To gain what had been wisely lost! 'Oh, let me strive to make the most 'Of the poor stinted soul, I nipped Of budding wings, else well equipt For voyage from summer isle to isle! And though she needs must reconcile Ambition to the life on ground, Still, I can profit by late found But precious knowledge. Mind is best— I will seize mind, forego the rest And try how far my tethered strength May crawl in this poor breadth and length. Let me, since I can fly no more, At least spin dervish-like about ' (Till giddy rapture almost doubt I fly) through circling sciences, Philosophies and histories! Should the whirl slacken there, then Verse, Fining to music, shall asperse Fresh and fresh fire-dew, till I strain Intoxicate, half-break my chain!

'Not joyless, though more favoured feet Stand calm, where I want wings to beat The floor? At least earth's bond is broke!

XXVIII.

Then, (sickening even while I spoke)

'Let me alone! No answer, pray,

- 'To this! I know what Thou wilt say!
- 'All still is earth's,—to Know, as much
- 'As Feel its truths, which if we touch

'With sense or apprehend in soul,

- 'What matter? I have reached the goal—
 "Whereto does Knowledge serve!" will burn
- 'My eyes, too sure, at every turn!
- 'I cannot look back now, nor stake
- 'Bliss on the race, for running's sake.
- 'The goal's a ruin like the rest!'-
- -" And so much worse thy latter quest, (Added the Voice) "that even on earth,
- "Whenever, in man's soul, had birth
- "Those intuitions, grasps of guess,
- "That pull the more into the less,
- "Making the finite comprehend
- "Infinity, the bard would spend "Such praise alone, upon his craft,
- "As, when wind-lyres obey the waft,
- "Goes to the craftsman who arranged
- "The seven strings, changed them and rechanged-
- "Knowing it was the South that harped." He felt his song, in singing, warped,
- "Distinguished his and God's part: whence

"A world of spirit as of sense

- "Was plain to him, yet not too plain,
- "Which he could traverse, not remain
- "A guest in :-else were permanent
- "Heaven upon earth, its gleams were meant
- "To sting with hunger for the light,-

"Made visible in Verse, despite

- "The veiling weakness,-truth by means
- "Of fable, showing while it screens,—
- "Since highest truth, man e'er supplied,

"Was ever fable on outside.

- "Such gleams made bright the earth an age:
- "Now, the whole sun's his heritage! "Take up thy world, it is allowed,
- "Thou who hast entered in the cloud!

XXIX.

Then I—' Behold, my spirit bleeds, 'Catches no more at broken reedse-'But lilies flower those reeds above— 'I let the world go, and take love! 'Love survives in me, albeit those 'I loved are henceforth masks and shows, 'Not loving men and women: still 'I mind how love repaired all ill, 'Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth amends 'With parents, brothers, children, friends! 'Some semblance of a woman yet 'With eyes to help me to forget, 'Shall live with me; and I will match 'Departed love with love, attach 'Its fragments to my whole, nor scorn 'The poorest of the grains of corn 'I save from shipwreck on this isle,

'More precious for the pains. I pray, 'For love, then, only!'

"Beside creating thee unto

'Trusting its barrenness may smile 'With happy foodful green one day,

XXX.

At the word. The Form, I looked to have been stirred With pity and approval, rose O'er me, as when the headsman throws Axe over shoulder to make end— I fell prone, letting Him expend His wrath, while, thus, the inflicting Voice Smote me. "Is this thy final choice? 'Tis some what late! "Love is the best? "And all thou dost enumerate " Of power and beauty in the world, "The mightiness of love was curled "Inextricably round about. "Love lay within it and without, "To clasp thee,—but in vain! Thy soul "Still shrunk from Him who made the whole, "Still set deliberate aside "His love!—Now take love! Well betide "Thy tardy conscience! Haste to take "The show of love for the name's sake, "Remembering every moment Who

- 'These ends, and these for thee, was said
- "To undergo death in thy stead
- "In flesh like thine: so ran the tale.
- "What doubt in thee could countervail
- "Belief in it? Upon the ground
- "'That in the story had been found
- "'Too much love? How could God love so?'
- "He who in all his works below
- "Adapted to the needs of man,
- " Made love the basis of the plan,-
- " Did love, as was demonstrated:
- "While man, who was so fit instead,
- "To hate, as every day gave proof, -
- "You thought man, for his kind's behoof,
- "Both could and would invent that scheme
- "Of perfect love—'twould well beseem
- "Cain's nature thou wast wont to praise,
- "Not tally with God's usual ways!"

XXXI.

And I cowered deprecatingly--

- 'Thou Love of God! Or let me die,
- 'Or grant what shall seem Heaven almost!
- 'Let me not know that all is lost,
- 'Though lost it be-leave me not tied
- 'To this despair, this corpse-like bride!
- 'Let that old life seem mine—no more—
- 'With limitation as before,
- 'With darkness, hunger, toil, distress:
- 'Be all the earth a wilderness!
- 'Only let me go on, go on,
- Still hoping ever and anon
- 'To reach one eve the Better Land!'

XXXII.

Then did the Form expand, expand— I knew Him through the dread disguise, As the whole God within his eyes Embraced me.

XXXIII.

When I lived again,
The day was breaking,—the grey plain
I rose from, silvered thick with dew.
Was this a visjon? False or true?

Since then, three varied years are spent, And commonly my mind is bent To think it was a dream—be sure A mere dream and distemperature— The last day's watching: then the night,— The shock of that strange Northern Light Set my head swimming, bred in me A dream. And so I live, you see, Go through the world, try, prove, reject, Prefer, still struggling to effect My warfare; happy that I can Be crossed and thwarted as a man, Not left in God's contempt apart, With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart, Tame in earth's paddock as her prize. Thank God, she still each method trics To catch me, who may yet escape, She knows, the fiend in angel's shape! Thank God no paradise stands barred To entry, and I find it hard To be a Christian, as I said! Still every now and then my head Raised glad, sinks mournful—all grows drear Spite of the sunshine, while I fear And think, 'How dreadful to be grudged

'No ease henceforth, as one that's judged,

'Condemned to earth for ever, shut

'From Heaven'

But Easter-Day breaks! Christ rises! Mercy every way Is infinite,—and who can say?

SORDELLO.

1840.

SORDELLO.

BOOK THE FIRST.

Who will, may hear Sordello's story told: His story? Who believes me shall behold The man, pursue his fortunes to the end Like me; for as the friendless people's friend Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin Named o' the Naked Arm, I single out Sordello, compassed murkily about With ravage of six long sad hundred years: Only believe me. Ye believe?

Appears Verona . . . Never, I should warn you first, Of my own choice had this, if not the worst Yet not the best expedient, served to tell A story I could body forth so well By making speak, myself kept out of view, The very man as he was wont to do, And leaving you to say the rest for him: Since, though I might be proud to see the dim Abysmal Past divide its hateful surge, Letting of all men this one man emerge Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past, I should delight in watching first to last His progress as you watch it, not a whit More in the secret than yourselves who sit Fresh-chapleted to listen: but it seems Your setters-forth of unexampled themes, Makers of quite new men, producing them Had best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem The wearer's quality, or take his stand Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand

Beside them; so for once I face ye, friends,

Summoned together from the world's four ends, Dropped down from Heaven or cast up from Hell, To hear the story I propose to tell. Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick, Catching the dead if Fate denies the quick And shaming her; 'tis not for Fate to choose Silence or song because she can refuse Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our sake: I have experienced something of her spite; But there's a realm wherein she has no right • And I have many lovers: say but few Friends Fate accords me? Here they are; now view The host I muster! Many a lighted face Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace; What else should tempt them back to taste our air Except to see how their successors fare? My audience: and they sit, each ghostly man Striving to look as living as he can, Brother by breathing brother; thou art set, Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I'll not fret A wondrous soul of them, nor move Death's spleen Who loves not to unlock them. Friends! I mean The living in good earnest—ye elect Chiefly for love—suppose not I reject Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep Some fit occasion forth, for fear ye sleep, To glean your bland approvals. Then, appear, Verona! stay-thou, spirit, come not near Now—nor this time desert thy cloudy place To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face! I need not fear this audience, I make free With them, but then this is no place for thee! The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown Up out of memories of Marathon, Would echo like his own sword's griding screech Braying a Persian shield,—the silver speech Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin, Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in The knights to tilt—wert thou to hear! What heart Have I to play my puppets, bear my part Before these worthies?

Lo, the Past is hurled In twain: upthrust, out-staggering on the world, Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears Its outline, kindles at the core, appears Verona. 'Tis six hundred years and more

The Second Friedrich wore Since an event. The purple, and the Third Honorius filled That autumn eve was stilled: The holy chair. At last remains of sunset dimly burned O'er the far forests like a torch-flame turned By the wind back upon its bearer's hand In one long flare of crimson; as a brand The woods beneath lay black. A single eye From all Verona cared for the soft sky: But, gathering in its ancient market-place, Talked group with restless group; and not a face But wrath made livid, for among them were Death's staunch purveyors, such as have in care To feast him. Fear had long since taken root In every breast, and now these crushed its fruit, The ripe hate, like a wine: to note the way It worked while each grew drunk! men grave and grey Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro, Letting the silent luxury trickle slow About the hollows where a heart should be; But the young gulped with a delirious glee Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood At the fierce news: for, be it understood, Envoys apprised Verona that her prince Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust With Ecclin Romano, from his seat Ferrara,—over zealous in the feat And stumbling on a peril unaware, Was captive, "trammelled in his proper snare," They phrase it, "taken by his own intrigue:" Immediate succour, from the Lombard League Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope, For Azzo therefore and his fellow—hope Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast! Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast: Prone is the purple pavice; Este makes Mirth for the Devil when he undertakes To play the Ecclin; as if it cost Merely your pushing-by to gain a post Like his! The patron tells ye, once for all, There be sound reasons that preferment fall On our beloved . . .

Duke o' the Rood, why not?
Shouted an Estian, grudge ye such a lot?
The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her own,
Some stealthy trick to better beasts unknown

That quick with prey enough her hunger blunts And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion hunts. Taurello, quoth an envoy, as in wane Dwelt at Ferrara. Like an osprey fain To fly but forced the earth his couch to make Far inland till his friend the tempest wake, Waits he the Kaiser's coming; and as yet That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps; but let Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs The aroused hurricane ere it enroughs The sea it means to cross because of him: Sinketh the breeze? His hope-sick eye grows dim; Creep closer on the creature! Every day Strengthens the Pontiff; Ecelin, they say, Dozes at Oliero, with dry lips Telling upon his perished finger-tips How many ancestors are to depose Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the doze Deposits him in hell; so Guelfs rebuilt Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet Buccio Virtù; God's wafer, and the street Is narrow! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm. This could not last. Off Salinguerra went To Padua, Podestà, with pure intent, Said he, my presence, judged the single bar To permanent tranquillity, may jar No longer—so! his back is fairly turned? The pair of goodly palaces are burned, The gardens ravaged, and your Guelf is drunk A week with joy; the next, his laughter sunk In sobs of blood, for he found, some strange way. Old Salinguerra back again; I say, Old Salinguerra in the town once more Uprooting, overturning, flame before Blood fetlock-high beneath him; Azzo fled; Who scaped the carnage followed; then the dead Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne. He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone, Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce, On the gorged bird. The burghers ground their teeth To see troop after troop encamp beneath I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty patch It took so many patient months to snatch Out of the marsh; while just within their walls Men fed on men. Astute Taurello calls

A parley: let the Count wind up the war! Richard, light-hearted as a plunging star, Agrees to enter for the kindest ends Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends, No horse-boy more for fear your timid sort Should fly Ferrara at the bare report. Quietly through the town they rode, jog-jog; Ten, twenty, thirty... curse the catalogue Of burnt Guelf houses! Strange Taurello shows Not the least sign of life—whereat arose A general growl: How? With his victors by? I and my Veronese? My troops and I? Receive us, was your word? so jogged they on, Nor laughed their host too openly: once gone Into the trap...

Six hundred years ago! Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe (Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles, Albeit the worm, our busy brother, drills His sprawling path through letters anciently Made fine and large to suit some abbot's eye) When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask, Flung John of Brienne's favor from his casque, Forswore crusading, had no mind to leave Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve Losses to Otho and to Barbaross, Or make the Alps less easy to recross; And, thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear, Was excommunicate that very year. The triple-bearded Teuton come to life! Groaned the Great League; and, arming for the strife, Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin, Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin, Its cry; what cry?

The Emperor to come!
His crowd of feudatories, all and some
That leapt down with a crash of swords, spears, shields,
One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,
Scattered anon, took station here and there,
And carried it, till now, with little care—
Cannot but cry for him; how else rebut
Us longer? Cliffs an earthquake suffered jut
In the mid-sea, each domineering crest
Nothing save such another throe can wrest
From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed grown
Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle thrown
Too thick, too fast accumulating round,
Too sure to over-riot and confound

Ere long each brilliant islet with itself Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf, Whirling the sea-drift wide: alas, the bruised And sullen wreck! Sunlight to be diffused For that! Sunlight, 'neath which, a scum at first, The million fibres of our chokeweed nurst Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled main, And, shattered by those rocks, took hold again, So kindly blazed it—that same blaze to brood O'er every cluster of the multitude Still hazarding new clasps, ties, filaments, An emulous exchange of pulses, vents Of nature into nature; till some growth Unfancied yet exuberantly clothe A surface solid now, continuous, one: The Pope, for us the People, who begun The People, carries on the People thus, To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us! See you?

Or say, Two Principles that live Each fitly by its Representative: Hill-cat . . . who called him so, our gracefullest Adventurer? the ambiguous stranger-guest Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur, Those talons to their sheath!) whose velvet purr Soothes jealous neighbours when a Saxon scout . . . Arpo or Yoland, is it? one without A country or a name, presumes to couch Beside their noblest; until men avouch That of all Houses in the Trevisan Conrad descries no fitter, rear or van, Than Ecelo! They laughed as they enrolled That name at Milan on the page of gold For Godego, Ramon, Marostica, Cartiglion, Bassano, Loria, And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's fief! No laughter when his son, the Lombard Chief Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent To Italy along the Vale of Trent, Welcomed him at Roncaglia! Sadness now--The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow, The Asolan and Euganean hills, The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills Them all that Ecclin vouchsafes to stay Among and care about them; day by day Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot, A castle building to defend a cot, A cot built for a castle to defend.

Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end To boasts how mountain ridge may join with ridge By sunken gallery and soaring bridge— He takes, in brief, a figure that beseems The griesliest nightmare of the Church's dreams. A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged From its old interests, and nowise changed By its new neighbourhood; perchance the vaunt Of Otho, "my own Este shall supplant Your Este," come to pass. The sire led in A son as cruel; and this Ecelin Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and tall, And curling and compliant; but for all Romano (so they style him) thrives, that neck Of his so pinched and white, that hungry cheek Proved 'tis some fiend, not him, men's flesh is meant To feed: whereas Romano's instrument, Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole I' the world, a tree whose boughs are slipt the bole Successively, why should not he shed blood To further a design? Men understood Living was pleasant to him as he wore His careless surcoat, glanced some missive o'er Propped on his truncheon in the public way. Ecelin lifts two writhen hands to pray At Oliero's convent now: so, place For Azzo, Lion of the . . . why disgrace A worthiness conspicuous near and far (Atii at Rome while free and consular, Este at Padua to repulse the Hun) By trumpeting the Church's princely son Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine, Ancona's march, Ferrara's . . . ask, in fine, Our chronicles, commenced when some old monk Found it intolerable to be sunk (Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell) Quite out of summer while alive and well: Ended when by his mat the Prior stood, Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood, Striving to coax from his decrepit brains The reason Father Porphyry took pains To blot those ten lines out which used to stand First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand. The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore Was vested in a certain Twenty-four; And while within his palace these debate

Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate, Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare

Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care For aught that's seen or heard until we shut The smother in, the lights, all noises but The carroch's booming; safe at last! Why strange Such a recess should lurk behind a range Of banquet-rooms? Your finger—thus—you push A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush Upon the banqueters, select your prey, Waiting, the slaughter-weapons in the way Strewing this very bench, with sharpened ear A preconcerted signal to appear; Or if you simply crouch with beating heart Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now; Nor any . . . does that one man sleep whose brow The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er? What woman stood beside him? not the more Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes Because that arras fell between! Her wise And lulling words are yet about the room, Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom Down even to her vesture's creeping stir: And so reclines he, saturate with her, Until an outcry from the square beneath Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to breathe Above the cunning element, and shakes The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it, The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away Till the Armenian bridegroom's dving day, In his wool wedding-robe; for he—for he— "Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy" (If I should falter now)—for he is Thine! Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine! A herald-star I know thou didst absorb Relentless into the consummate orb That scared it from its right to roll along A sempiternal path with dance and song Fulfilling its allotted period Serenest of the progeny of God Who yet resigns it not; his darling stoops With no quenched lights, desponds with no blank troops Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent Utterly with thee, its shy element Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear: Still, what if I approach the august sphere Named now with only one name, disentwine

That under current soft and argentine
From its fierce mate in the majestic mass
Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt with glass
In John's transcendent vision, launch once more
That lustre? Dante, pacer of the shore
Where glutted Hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,
Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume—
Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope
Into a darkness quieted by hope—
Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye
In gracious twilights where his Chosen lie,
I would do this! If I should falter now—
In Mantua-territory half is slough
Half pine-tree forest: maples, scarlet-oaks

Half pine-tree forest; maples, scarlet-oaks Breed o'er the river-beds; even Mincio chokes With sand the summer through; but 'tis morass In winter up to Mantua walls. There was (Some thirty years before this evening's coil) One spot reclaimed from the surrounding spoil, Goito; just a castle built amid A few low mountains; firs and larches hid Their main defiles and rings of vineyard bound The rest: some captured creature in a pound, Whose artless wonder quite precludes distress, Secure beside in its own loveliness, So peered with airy head, below, above, The castle at its toils the lapwings love To glean among at grape-time. Pass within: A maze of corridors contrived for sin, Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got past, You gain the inmost chambers, gain at last A maple-panelled room: that haze which Floating about the panel, if there gleams A sunbeam over it will turn to gold And in light-graven characters unfold The Arab's wisdom everywhere; what shade Marred them a moment, those slim pillars made, Cut like a company of palms to prop The roof, each kissing top entwined with top, Leaning together; in the carver's mind Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek combined With straining forehead, shoulders purpled, hair Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear A vintage: graceful sister-palms: but quick To the main wonder now. A vault, see; thick Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits Across the buttress suffer light by fits Upon a marvel in the midst: nay, stoop—

A dullish grey-streaked cumbrous font, a group Round it, each side of it, where'er one sees, Upholds it—shrinking Caryatides Of just-tinged marble like Eve's lilied flesh Beneath her Maker's finger when the fresh First pulse of life shot brightening the snow: The font's edge burthens every shoulder, so They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed, Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed, Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil Their eyes, some, propping chin and check so pale, Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength Goes when the grate above shuts heavily: So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see. Like priestesses because of sin impure Penanced for ever, who resigned endure, Having that once drunk sweetness to the dregs: And every eve Sordello's visit begs Pardon for them: const ant as eve he came To sit beside each in her turn, the same As one of them, a certain space: and awe Made a great indistinctness till he saw Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress chinks. Gold seven times glob ed; surely our maiden shrinks And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain Her load were lighte ned, one shade less the stain Obscured her forehe ad, yet one more bead slipt From off the rosary whereby the crypt Keeps count of the contritions of its charge? Then with a step more light, a heart more large, He may depart, leave her and every one To linger out the penance in mute stone. Ah, but Sordello? 'Tis the tale I mean To tell you. In this castle may be seen, On the hill tops, or underneath the vines, Or southward by the mound of firs and pines That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness, A slender boy in a loose page's dress. Sordello: do but look on him awhile Watching ('tis autumn) with an earnest smile The noisy flock of thievish birds at work Among the vellowing vineyards; see him lurk ("Tis winter with its sullenest of storms) Beside that arras-length of broidered forms. On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light Which makes you warrior's visage flutter bright -Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,

And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed —Auria, and their Child, with all his wives From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives, Lady of the castle, Adelaide: his face -Look, now he turns away! Yourselves shall trace (The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine, A sharp and restless lip, so well combine With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive Delight at every sense; you can believe Sordello foremost in the regal class Nature has broadly severed from her mass Of men and framed for pleasure as she frames Some happy lands that have luxurious names For loose fertility; a footfall there Suffices to upturn to the warm air Half-germ inating spices, mere decay Produces richer life, and day by day New pollen on the lily-petal grows. And still more labyrinthine buds the rose. You recognise at once the finer dress Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled (As though she would not trust them with her world) A veil that shows a sky not near so blue, And lets but half the sun look fervid through: How can such love like souls on each full-fraught Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught Beyond its beauty; till exceeding love Becomes an aching weight, and, to remove A curse that haunts such natures—to preclude Their finding out themselves can work no good To what they love nor make it very blest By their endeavour, they are fain invest The lifeless thing with life from their own soul, Availing it to purpose, to control, To dwell distinct and have peculiar ioy And separate interests that may employ That beauty fitly, for its proper sake; Nor rest they here fresh births of beauty wake Fresh homage; every grade of love is past, With every mode of loveliness; then cast Inferior idols off their borrowed crown Before a coming glory: up and down Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine To throb the secret forth; a touch divine— And the scaled eveball owns the mystic rod: Visibly through his garden walketh God. So fare they—Now revert: one character

Denotes them through the progress and the stir; A need to blend with each external charm. Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and warm. In something not themselves; they would belong To what they worship—stronger and more strong Thus prodigally fed—that gathers shape And feature, soon imprisons past escape The votary framed to love and to submit Nor ask, as passionate he kneels to it. Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs A legend; Light had birth ere moons and suns. Flowing through space a river and alone. Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were strown Hither and thither, foundering and blind, When into each of them rushed Light—to find Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance. Let such forego their just inheritance! For there's a class that eagerly looks, too, On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew, Proclaims each new revealment born a twin With a distinctest consciousness within Referring still the quality, now first Revealed, to their own soul; its instinct nursed In silence, now remembered better, shown More thoroughly, but not the less their own: A dream come true; the special exercise Of any special function that implies The being fair or good or wise or strong, Dormant within their nature all along— Whose fault? So homage other souls direct Without, turns inward; how should this deject Thee, soul? they murmur; wherefore strength be quelled Because, its trivial accidents withheld, Organs are missed that clog the world, inert, Wanting a will, to quicken and exert, Like thine—existence cannot satiate, Cannot surprise; laugh thou at envious fate, Who from earth's simplest combination stampt With individuality—uncrampt By living its faint elemental life, Dost soar to heaven's complexest essence, rife With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last, Equal to being all.

In truth? Thou hast
Life, then—wilt challenge life for us: thy race
Is vindicated so, obtains its place
In thy ascent, the first of us; whom we
May follow, to the meanest, finally,

With our more bounded wills?

Ah, but to find A certain mood enervate such a mind. Counsel it slumber in the solitude Thus reached nor, stooping, task for mankind's good Its nature just as life and time accord (Too narrow an area to reward Emprize—the world's occasion worthless since Not absolutely fitted to evince Its mastery), or if yet worse befall, And a desire possess it to put all That nature forth, forcing our straitened sphere Contain it; to display completely here The mastery another life should learn, Thrusting in time eternity's concern, So that Sordello. . . . Fool, who spied the mark Of leprosy upon him, violet dark Already as he loiters? Born just now— With the new century—beside the glow And efflorescence out of barbarism: Witness a Greek or two from the abysm That stray through Florence-town with studious air, Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair . . . If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet! While at Siena is Guidone set, Forehead on hand; a painful birth must be Matured ere San Eufemio's sacristy Or transept gather fruits of one great gaze At the noon-sun: look you! An orange haze— The same blue stripe round that—and, i' the midst, Thy spectral whiteness, mother-maid, who didst Pursue the dizzy painter!

Woe then worth Any officious babble letting forth The leprosy confirmed and ruinous To spirit lodged in a contracted house! Go back to the beginning rather; blend It gently with Sordello's life; the end Is piteous, you shall see, but much between Pleasant enough; meantime some pyx to screen The full-grown pest; some lid to shut upon The goblin! As they found at Babylon, (Colleagues mad Lucius and sage Antonine) Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine Its pride,—in rummaging the rarities, A cabinet; be sure, who made the prize Opened it greedily; and out there curled Just such another plague, for half the world

Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and crouch asquat, Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot Until your time is ripe! The coffer-lid Is fastened and the coffer safely hid Under the Loxian's choicest gifts of gold. Who will may hear Sordello's story told, And how he never could remember when He dwelt not at Goito; calmly then About this secret lodge of Adelaide's Glided his youth away: beyond the glades On the fir-forest's border, and the rim Of the low range of mountain, was for him No other world: but that appeared his own To wander through at pleasure and alone. The castle too seemed empty; far and wide Might be disport unless the northern side Lay under a mysterious interdict— Slight, just enough remembered to restrict His roaming to the corridors, the vault Where those font-bearers expiate their fault, The maple-chamber, and the little nooks And nests and breezy parapet that looks Over the woods to Mantua; there he strolled. Some foreign women-servants, very old, Tended and crept about him—all his clue To the world's business and embroiled ado Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most. And first a simple sense of life engrossed Sordello in his drowsy Paradise; The day's adventures for the day suffice— Its constant tribute of perceptions strange With sleep and stir in healthy interchange Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease Like the great palmer-worm that strips the trees, Eats the life out of every luscious plant, And when September finds them sere or scant Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite And hies him after unforeseen delight: So fed Sordello, not a shard disheathed; As ever round each new discovery wreathed Luxuriantly the fancies infantine His admiration, bent on making fine Its novel friend at any risk, would fling In gay profusion forth: a ficklest king Confessed those minions! Eager to dispense So much from his own stock of thought and sense As might enable each to stand alone And serve him for a fellow; with his own

Joining the qualities that just before Had graced some older favourite: so they wore A fluctuating halo, yesterday Set flicker and to-morrow filched away; Those upland objects each of separate name, Each with an aspect never twice the same, Waxing and waning as the new-born host Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost, Gave to familiar things a face grotesque; Only, preserving through the mad burlesque A grave regard: conceive; the orpine patch Blossoming earliest on the log-house-thatch The day those archers wound along the vines— Related to the Chief that left their lines To climb with clinking step the northern stair Up to the solitary chambers where Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall; He o'er-festooning every interval As the adventurous spider, making light Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height, From barbican to battlement; so flung Fantasies forth and in their centre swung Our architect: the breezy morning fresh Above, and merry; all his waving mesh Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-edged. This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged To laying such a spangled fabric low Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow: But its abundant will was balked here: doubt Rose tardily in one so fenced about From most that nurtures judgment, care and pain: Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain, Less favoured, to adopt betimes and force Stead us, diverted from our natural course Of joys, contrive some yet amid the dearth, Vary and render them, it may be, worth Most we forego: suppose Sordello hence Selfish enough, without a moral sense However feeble; what informed the boy Others desired a portion in his joy? Or say a ruthful chance broke woof and warp— A heron's nest beat down by March winds sharp, A fawn breathless beneath the precipice, A bird with unsoiled breast and filmless eyes Warm in the brake—could these undo the trance Lapping Sordello? Not a circumstance That makes for you, friend Naddo! Eat fern-seed And peer beside us and report indeed

If (your word) Genius dawned with throes and stings And the whole fiery catalogue, while springs Summers and winters quietly came and went, Putting at length that period to content By right the world should have imposed: bereft Of its good offices, Sordello, left To study his companions, managed rip Their fringe off, learn the true relationship, Core with its crust, their natures with his own; Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone: As if the poppy felt with him! Though he Partook the poppy's red effrontery Till Autumn spoils their fleering quite with rain, And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling crane Protrudes: that's gone! yet why renounce, for that, His disenchanted tributaries—flat Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn Their simple presence may not well be borne Whose parley was a transport once: recall The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after all, A poppy: why distrust the evidence Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense? The new-born Judgment answered, little boots Beholding other creatures' attributes And having none: or say that it sufficed, Yet, could one but possess, oneself, (entired Judgment) some special office! Nought beside Serves you? Well then, be somehow justified For this ignoble wish to circumscribe And concentrate, rather than swell, the tribe Of actual pleasures: what now from without Effects it?—proves, despite a lurking doubt, Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble spared; He tasted joys by proxy, clearly fared The better for them? thus much craved his soul. Alas, from the beginning Love is whole And true; if sure of nought beside, most sure Of its own truth at least; nor may endure A crowd to see its face, that cannot know How hot the pulses throb its heart below; While its own helplessness and utter want Of means to worthily be ministrant To what it worships, do but fan the more Its flame, exalt the idol far before Itself as it would have it ever be; Souls like Sordello, on the contrary, Coerced and put to shame, retaining Will, Care little, take mysterious comforts still,

But look forth tremblingly to ascertain If others judge their claims not urged in vain —Will say for them their stifled thoughts aloud; So they must ever live before a crowd? Vanity, Naddo tells you.

Whence contrive These brave women just alive, A crowd, now? That archer-troop? Forth glided—not alone Each painted warrior, every girl of stone, —Nor Adelaide bent double o'er a scroll, One maiden at her knees, that eve his soul Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd glooms On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird perfumes, Started the meagre Tuscan up (her eyes, The maiden's also, bluer with surprise) —But the entire out-world: whatever scraps And snatches, song and story, dreams perhaps, Conceited the world's offices, and he Transferred to the first-comer, flower or tree, Not counted a befitting heritage Each, of its own right, singly to engage Some Man, no other; such availed to stand Alone: strength, wisdom, grace on every hand Soon disengaged themselves; and he discerned A sort of human life: at least, was turned A stream of life-like figures through his brain— Lord, Liegeman, Valvassor and Suzerain, Ere he could choose, surrounded him; a stuff To work his pleasure on; there, sure enough, But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze? Are they to simply testify the ways He who convoked them sends his soul along With the cloud's thunder or a dove's brood-song? While they live each his life, boast each his own Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone In some one point where something dearest loved Is easiest gained—far worthier to be proved Than aught he envies in the forest-wights! No simple and self-evident delights, But mixed desires of unimagined range, Contrasts or combinations, new and strange, Irksome perhaps, yet plainly recognised By this, the sudden company—loves prized By those who are to prize his own amount Of loves. Once care because such make account. Allow a foreign recognition stamp The current value, and your crowd shall vamp You counterfeits enough; and so their print

Be on the piece, 'tis gold, attests the mint And good, pronounce they whom my new appeal Is made to: if their casual print conceal-This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss What I have lived without, nor felt my loss— Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome, -What matter? so must speech expand the dumb Part sigh, part smile with which Sordello, late No foolish woodland-sights could satiate, Betakes himself to study hungrily Just what the puppers his crude fantasy Supposes notablest, popes, kings, priests, knights, May please to promulgate for appetites; Accepting all their artificial joys Not as he views them, but as he employs Each shape to estimate the other's stock Of attributes, that on a marshalled flock Of authorised enjoyments he may spend Himself, be Men, now, as he used to blend With tree and flower—nay more entirely, else 'Twere mockery: for instance, how excels My life that Chieftain's ? (who apprised the youth Ecelin, here, becomes this month in truth, Imperial Vicar?) Turns he in his tent Remissly? Be it so —my head is bent Deliciously amid my girls to sleep: What if he stalks the Trentine-pass? You steep I climbed an hour ago with little toil -We are alike there: but can I, too, foil The Guelfs' paid stabber, carelessly afford St. Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o' the sword Baffling their project in a moment? No rescue! Poppy he is none, but peer To Ecclin, assuredly: his hand, Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a brand With Ecclin's success -try, now! He soon Was satisfied, returned as to the moon From earth; left each abortive boy's-attempt For feats, from failure happily exempt, In fancy at his beek. One day I will Accomplish it! Are they not older still —Not grown up men and women? 'Tis beside Only a dream; and though I must abide With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent For all myself, acquire an instrument For acting what these people act; my soul Hunting a body out, obtain its whole Desire some day! How else express chagrin

And resignation, show the hope steal in With which he let sink from an aching wrist The rough-hown ash-bow, and a gold shaft hiss'd Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down Superbly! Crosses to the breach! God's Town Is gained Him back! Why bend rough ash-bows more? So lives he: if not careless as before, Comforted: for one may anticipate, Rehearse the future; be prepared when fate Shall have prepared in turn real men whose names Startle, real places of enormous fames, Estes abroad and Ecclins at home To worship him, Mantuas, Veronas, Rome To witness it. Who grudges time so spent? Rather test qualities to heart's content— Summon them, thrice selected, near and far— Compress the starriest into one star, So grasp the whole at once! The pageant's thinned Accordingly; from rank to rank, like wind His spirit passed to winnow and divide; Back fell the simpler phantasms; every side The strong clave to the wise; with either classed The beauteous; so, till two or three amassed Mankind's beseemingnesses, and reduced Themselves eventually, graces loosed, And lavished strengths, to heighten up One Shape Whose potency no creature should escape: Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk? Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the stalk, Is some grey scorching Saracenic wine The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline— Those swarthy hazel-clusters, seamed and chapped, Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-capped, Are dates plucked from the bough John Brienne sent To keep in mind his sluggish armament Of Canaan . . . Friedrich's, all the pomp and fierce Demeanour! But harsh sounds and sights transpierce So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are spells Upon the obdurate; that arm indeed Has thunder for its siave; but where's the need Of thunder if the strcke n multitude Hearkens, arrested in its angriest mood, While songs go up exulting, then dispread, Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead Like an escape of angels? 'Tis the tune, Nor much unlike the words the women croon Smilingly, colourless and faint designed

Each, as a worn-out queen's face some remind Of her extreme youth's love-tales. Eglamor Made that! Half minstrel and half emperor, Who but ill objects vexed him? Such he slew. The kinder sort were easy to subdue By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones; And these a gracious hand advanced to thrones Beneath him. Wherefore twist and torture this, Striving to name afresh the antique bliss, Instead of saying, neither less nor more, He had discovered, as our world before, Apollo? That shall be the name; nor bid Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid The man—what thefts of every clime and day Contributed to purfle the array He climbed with (June's at deep) some close ravine 'Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen, Over which singing soft the runnel slipt Elate with rains: into whose streamlet dipt He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet sock— Though really on the stubs of living rock Ages ago it crenneled; vines for roof, Lindens for walls; before him, aye aloof, Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-fly, Child of the simmering quiet, there to die: Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied Mighty descents of forest; multiplied Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees; There gendered the grave maple-stocks at ease: And, proud of its observer, strait the wood Tried old surprises on him; black it stood A sudden barrier ('twas a cloud passed o'er) So dead and dense the tiniest brute no more Must pass; yet presently (the cloud despatched) Each clump, for sooth, was glistering detached A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems! Yet could not be denounce the stratagems He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would hang White summer-lightnings; as it sank and sprang In measure, that whole palpitating breast Of Heaven, 'twas Apollo nature prest At eve to worship.

Time stole: by degrees
The Pythons perished off; his votaries
Sink to respectful distance; songs redeem
Their pains, but briefer; their dismissals seem
Emphatic; only girls are very slow
To disappear—his Delians! Some that glow

O' the instant, more with earlier loves to wrench Away, reserves to quell, disdains to quench; Alike in one material circumstance— All soon or late adore Apollo! Glance The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice, A Daphne! We secure Count Richard's voice In Este's counsels, one for Este's ends As our Taurello, say his faded friends. By granting him our Palma! The sole child, They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled Ecclin, years before this Adelaide Wedded and turned him wicked; but the maid Rejects his suit, those sleepy women boast. She, scorning all beside, deserves the most Sordello: so conspicuous in his world Of dreams sate Palma. How the tresses curled Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound About her like a glory, even the ground Was bright as with shed sunbeams; (breathe not, breathe Not)—poised, see, one leg doubled underneath, Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow, Rests, but the other, listlessly below, O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air, The vein-streaks swollen a richer violet where The languid blood lies heavily; and calm On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm, As but suspended in the act to rise By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets Apollo's gaze in the pine-glooms.

Time fleets Because the pre-appointed age That's worst! Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage She all but promised. Lean he grows and pale, Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail Fancies to soothe him. Time steals, yet alone He tarries here! The earnest smile is gone. How long this might continue matters not: For ever, possibly; since to the spot None come: our lingering Taurello quits Mantua at last, and light our lady flits Back to her place disburthened of a care. Strange—to be constant here if he is there! Is it distrust? Oh, never! for they both Goad Ecelin alike-Romano's growth So daily manifest that Azzo's dumb And Richard wavers . . . let but Friedrich come! -Find matter for the minstrelsy's report

Lured from the Isle and its young Kaiser's court To sing us a Messina morning up; Who, double rillets of a drinking cup, Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth, Northward to Provence that, and thus far south The other: what a method to apprise Neighbours of births, espousals, obsequies! Which in their very tongue the Troubadour Records; and his performance makes a tour For Trouveres bear the miracle about, Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout, Until the Formidable rouse is famed Over the country—as Taurello aimed Who introduced, although the rest adopt, The novelty. Such games her absence stopped Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse No longer, in the light of day pursues Her plans at Mantua—whence an accident That, breaking on Sordello's mixed content Opened, like any flash that cures the blind, The veritable business of mankind.

BOOK THE SECOND.

The woods were long austere with snow: at last Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes, Brightened, "as in the slumbrous heart o' the woods Our buried year, a witch, grew young again To placed incantations, and that stain About were from her caldron, green smoke blent With those black pines "—so Eglamor gave vent To a chance fancy: whence a just rebuke From his companion; brother Naddo shook The solemnest of brows: Beware, he said, Of setting up conceits in Nature's stead! Forth wandered our Sordello. Nought so sure As that to-day's adventure will secure Palma, the forest-lady--only pass O'er you damp mound and its exhausted grass, Under that brake where sundawn feeds the stalks Of withered fern with gold, into those walks Of pines and take her! Buovantly he went. Again his stooping forchead was besprent Then wide With dew-drops from the skirting ferns. Opened the great morass, shot every side With flashing water through and through; a-shine, Thick steaming, all alive. Whose shape divine Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour, glanced Athwart the flying herons? He advanced, But warily; though Mincio leaped no more, Each foot-fall burst up in the marish-floor A diamond jet: and if you stooped to pick Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick, And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt or loach, A sudden pond would silently encroach This way and that. On Palma passed. The verge Of a new wood was gained. She will emerge Flushed, now, and panting; crowds to see; will own She loves him—Boniface to hear, to groun, To leave his suit! One screen of pine-trees still Opposes: but—the startling spectacleMantua, this time! Under the walls—a crowd Indeed—real men and women—gay and loud Round a pavilion. How he stood!

In truth

No prophecy had come to pass: his youth In its prime now—and where was homage poured Upon Sordeilo?—born to be adored, And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made To cope with any, cast into the shade By this and this. Yet something seem to prick And tingle in his blood; a sleight—a trick— And much would be explained. It went for naught— The best of their endowments were ill bought With his identity: nay, the conceit This present roving leads to Palma's feet Was not so vain . . . list! The word, Palma? Steal Aside, and die, Sordello; this is real, And this—abjure! What next? The curtains, see,

What next? The curtains, see, Dividing! She is there; and presently He will be there—the proper You, at length—In your own cherished dress of grace and strength: Most like the very Boniface...

Not so.

It was a showy man advanced; but though A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound Sank and the crowd disposed themselves around, —This is not he, Sordello felt; while "Place For the best Troubadour of Boniface," Holland the Jongleurs, "Eglamor whose lay Concludes his patron's Court of Love to-day." Obsequious Naddo strung his master's lute With the new lute-string, Elys, named to suit The song. He stealthily at watch, the while, Biting his lip to keep down a great smile Of pride: then up he struck. Sordello's brain Swam; for he knew a sometime deed again; So could supply each foolish gap and chasm The minstrel left in his enthusiasm, Mistaking its true version—was the tale Not of Apollo? Only, what avail Luring her down, that Elysian he pleased, If the man dares no further? Has he ceased? And, lo, the people's frank applause half done, Sordello was beside him, had begun (Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend The Trouvere) the true lay with the true end, Taking the other's names and time and place

For his. On flew the song, a giddy race, After the flying story; word made leap Out word; rhyme-rhyme; the lay could barely keep Pace with the action visibly rushing past: Back fell Naddo more aghast Both ended. Than your Egyptian from the harassed bull That wheels abrupt and, bellowing, fronts full His plague, who spies a scarab 'neath his tongue, And found 'twas Apis' flank his hasty prong Insulted. But the people—but the cries, The crowding round, and proffering the prize! (For he had gained some prize)—He seemed to shrink Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink One sight withheld him; there sat Adelaide, Silent; but at her knees the very maid Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich, The same pure fleecy hair; one curl of which, Golden and great, quite touched his cheek as o'er She leant, speaking some six words and no more; He answered something, anything; and she Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily Upon him, her neck's warmth and all; again Moved the arrested magic; in his brain Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare. And greater glare, until the intense flare Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his sense, And when he woke 'twas many a furlong thence, At home: the sun shining his ruddy wont: The customary birds'-chirp; but his front Was crowned—was crowned! Her scented scarf around His neck! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps the ground? He turned, and peeringly on him Brooded the women faces, kind and dim, Ready to talk. The Jongleurs in a troop Had brought him back, Naddo and Squarcialupe And Tagliafer; how strange! a childhood spent Assuming, well for him, so brave a bent! Since Eglamor, they heard, was dead with spite, And Palma chose him for her minstrel.

Iight
Sordello rose—to think, now; hitherto
He had perceived. Sure a discovery grew
Out of it all! Best live from first to last
The transport o'er again. A week he passed
Sucking the sweet out of each circumstance,
From the bard's outbreak to the luscious trance
Bounding his own achievement. Strange! A man
Recounted that adventure, and began

Imperfectly; his own task was to fill The frame-work up, sing well what he sung ill, Supply the necessary points, set loose As many incidents of little use —More imbecile the other, not to see Their relative importance clear as he! But for a special pleasure in the act Of singing—had he ever turned, in fact, From Elys, to sing Elys?—from each fit Of rapture, to contrive a song of it? True, this snatch or the other seemed to wind Into a treasure, helped himself to find A beauty in himself; for, see, he soared By means of that mere snatch to many a hoard Of fancies; as some falling cone bears oft The eye along the fir-tree-spire, aloft To a dove's nest. Then how divine the cause Such a performance should exact applause From men if they have fancies too? Can Fate Decree they find a beauty separate In the poor snatch itself . . . our Elys, there, ("Her head that's sharp and perfect like a pear, So close and smooth are laid the few fine locks Coloured like honey oozed from topmost rocks Sun-blanched the livelong summer ")—if they heard Just those two rhymes, assented at my word, And loved them as I love them who have run These fingers through those fine locks, let the sun Into the white cool skin . . . nay, thus I clutch Those locks!—I needs must be a God to such. Or if some few, above themselves, and yet Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set An impress on our gift? So men believe And worship what they know not, nor receive Delight from. Have they fancies—slow, perchance Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance Until by song each floating part be linked To each, and all grow palpable, distinct? He pondered this.

Meanwhile sounds low and drear Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near And nearer, and the underwood was pushed Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves crushed At the approach of men. The wind seemed laid; Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade Came o'er the sky although 'twas midday yet: Yeu saw each half-shut downcast violet, Flutter—a Roman bride, when they dispart

Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,
Holding that famous rape in memory still,
Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,
And looked thus, Eglamor would say—indeed
'Tis Hglamor, no other, these precede
Home hither in the woods. "Twere surely sweet
Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat
To sleep! thought Naddo, who in person led
Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,
A scanty company; for, sooth to say,
Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day:
Old worshippers were something shamed, old friends
Nigh weary; still the death proposed amends:
Let us but get them safely through my song
And home again, quoth Naddo.

All along. This man (they rest the bier upon the sand) —This calm corpse with the loose flowers in its hand. Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite: For him indeed was Naddo's notion right And Verse a temple-worship vague and vast, A ceremony that withdrew the last Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil Which hid the holy place—should one so frail Stand there without such effort? or repine That much was blank, uncertain at the shrine He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite, The Power responded, and some sound or sight Grew up, his own forever! to be fixed In rhyme, the beautiful, forever; mixed With his own life, unloosed when he should please, Having it safe at hand, ready to ease All pain, remove all trouble; every time He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme, Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love. Faltering; so distinct and far above Himself, these fancies! He, no genius rare, Transfiguring in fire or wave or air At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up, In some rock-chamber with his agate cup, His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few And their arrangement finds enough to do For his best art. Then, how he loved that art! The calling marking him a man apart From men—one not to care, take counsel for Cold hearts, comfortless faces (Eglamor Was neediest of his tribe) since verse, the gift, Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift

Away Apollo! and the tale amounts To this: when at Vicenza both her Counts Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin. Those Maltravers' hung on Ecelin, Reviling as he followed; he for spite Must fire their quarter, though that self-same night Among the flames young Ecelin was born Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn From the roused populace hard on the rear By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear Was high; into the thick Elcorte leapt, Saved her, and died; no creature left except His child to thank. And when the full escape Was known—how men impaled from chine to nape Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned Bishop Pistore's concubines, and burned Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell, Missing the sweeter prey—such courage well Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since, Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince Within a blind retreat where Adelaide (For, once this notable discovery made, The past at every point was understood) Can harbour easily when times are rude, When Este schemes for Palma—would retrieve That pledge, when Mantua is not fit to leave Longer unguarded with a vigilant eye, Taurello bides there so ambiguously (He who can have no motive now to moil For his own fortunes since their utter spoil) As it were worth while yet (goes the report) To disengage himself from us. In short, Apollo vanished; a mean youth, just named His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed -How shall I phrase it? Monarch of the World But, on the morning that array was furled For ever, and in place of one a slave To longings, wild, indeed, but longings save In dreams as wild, suppressed - one daring not Assume the mastery such dreams allot, Until a magical equipment, strength Grace, wisdom, decked him too,—he chose at length (Content with unproved wits and failing frame) In virtue of his simple Will, to claim That mastery, no less—to do his best With means so limited, and let the rest Go by,—the seal was set: never again Sordello could in his own sight remain

One of the many, one with hopes and cares And interests nowise distinct from theirs. Only peculiar in a thriveless store Of fancies, which were fancies and no more; Never again for him and for the crowd A common law was challenged and allowed If calmly reasoned of, howe'er denied By a mad impulse nothing justified Short of Apollo's presence: the divorce Is clear: why needs Sordello square his course By any known example? Men no more Compete with him than tree and flower before; Himself, inactive, yet is greater far Than such as act, each stooping to his star, Acquiring thence his function; he has gained The same result with meaner mortals trained To strength or beauty, moulded to express Each the idea that rules him; since no less He comprehends that function, but can still Embrace the others, take of Might his fill With Richard as of Grace with Palma, mix Their qualities, or for a moment fix On one, abiding free meantime, uncramped By any partial organ, never stamped Strong, so to Strength turning all energies-Wise, and restricted to becoming Wise— That is, he loves not, nor possesses One Idea that, star-like over, lures him on To its exclusive purpose. Fortunate This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate A soul so various—took no casual mould Of the first fancy and contracted, cold Lay clogged forever thence, averse to change Whereas it left her free to range, Remains itself a blank, cast into shade, Encumbers little, if it cannot aid. So, range, my soul! Who by self-consciousness, The last drop of all beauty dost express— The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence For thee: while for the world, that can dispense Wonder on men, themselves that wonder-make A shift to love at second hand and take Those for its idols who but idolize, Themselves,—that loves the soul as strong, as wise, Whose love is Strength, is Wisdom,—such shall bow Surely in unexampled worship now, Discerning me!-(Dear monarch, I beseech,

Notice how lamentably wide a breach
Is here! discovering this, discover too
What our poor world has possibly to do
With it! As pigmy natures as you please—
So much the better for you; take your ease
Look on, and laugh; style yourself God alone;
Strangle some day with a cross olive-stone;
All that is right enough: but why want us
To know that you yourself know thus and thus?
Nay finish—)

—Bow to me conceiving all Man's life, who see its blisses, great and small, Afar—not tasting any; no machine To exercise my utmost will is mine, Therefore mere consciousness for me!-Perceive What I could do, a mastery believe, Asserted and established to the throng By their selected evidence of Song Which now shall prove whate'er they are, or seek To be, I am—who take no pains to speak, Change no old standards of perfection, vex With no strange forms created to perplex, But mean perform their bidding and no more, At their own satisting-point give o'er, And each shall love in me the love that leads His soul to its perfection. Song, not Deeds, (For we get tired) was chosen. Fate would brook Mankind no other organ; He would look For not another channel to dispense His own volition and receive their sense Of its existing but would be content, Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent--Nor should, for instance, Strength an outlet seek And striving be admired, nor Grace bespeak Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes, Nor Wisdom, poured forth, change unseemly moods; But he would give and take on Song's one point: Like some huge throbbing-stone that, poised a-joint, Sounds to affect on its basaltic bed Must sue in just one accent: tempests shed Thunder, and raves the landstorm: only let That key by any little noise be set-The far benighted hunter's hallog pitch On that, the hungry curlew chance to scritch Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift, However loud, however low-all lift The groaning monster, stricken to the heart. Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its part,

And this, for his, will hardly interfere!

Its businesses in blood and blaze this year

—But wile the hour away—a pastime slight

Till he shall step upon the platform: right!

And now thus much is settled, cast in rough,

Proved feasible, be counselled! thought enough,

Slumber, Sordello! any day will serve:

Were it a less digested plan! how swerve

To-morrow? Meanwhile cat these sun-dried grapes

And watch the soaring hawk there! Life escapes

Merrily thus.

He thoroughly read o'er His truchman Naddo's missive six times more, Praying him visit Mantua and supply A famished world.

The evening star was high When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived Before him: friends applauded, foes connived, And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest Angels, and all these angels would be blest Supremely by a song—the thrice-renowned Then he found Goito manufacture. (Casting about to satisfy the crowd) That happy vehicle, so late allowed, A sore annoyance; 'twas the song's effect He cared for, scarce the song itself: reflect! In the past life what might be singing's use? Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse Praise, not the toilsome process which procured That praise, entitled Apollo: dreams abjured, No over-leaping means for ends—take both For granted or take neither! I am loth To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's; But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors Go pine; the Master certes meant to waste No effort, cautiously had probed the taste He'd please anon: true bard, in short, disturb His title if they could; nor spur nor curb, Fancy nor reason, wanting in him; whence The staple of his verses, common sense: He built on Man's broad nature—gift of gifts That power to build! The world contented shifts With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort Its poet-soul—that's, after all, a freak (The having eyes to see and tongue to speak) With our herd's stupid sterling happiness So plainly incompatible that—yesYes—should a son of his improve the breed And turn out poet, he were cursed indeed. Well, there's Goito to retire upon If the worst happen; best go stoutly on Now! thought Sordello.

Ay, and goes on yet! You pother with your glossaries to get A notion of the Troubadour's intent---His Rondels, Tenzons, Virlai or Sirvent— Much as you study arras how to twirl His Angelot, plaything of page and girl Once; but you surely reach, at last,—or, no! Never quite reach what struck the people so, As from the welter of their time he drew Its elements successively to view, Followed all actions backward on their course And catching up, unmingled at the source, Such a Strength, such a Weakness, added then A touch or two, and turned them into Men. Virtue took form, nor Vice refused a shape: Here Heaven opened, there was Hell agape, As Saint this simpered past in sanctity, Sinner the other flared portentous by A greedy People: then why stop, surprised At his success? The scheme was realised Too suddenly in one respect: a crowd Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud To speak, delicious homage to receive, Bianca's breath to feel upon his sleeve Who said, "But Anafest—why asks he less Than Lucio, in your verses? how confess, It seemed too much but yestereve!" The youth Who bade him earnestly "avow the truth, You love Bianca, surely, from your song; I knew I was unworthy!" soft or strong. In poured such tributes ere he had arranged Ethereal ways to take them, sorted, changed, Digested: courted thus at unawares. In spite of his pretensions and his cares He caught himself shamefully hankering After your obvious petty joys that spring From true life, fain relinquish pedestal And condescend with pleasures—one and all To be renounced, no doubt; for thus to chain Himself to single joys and so refrain From tasting their quintessence, frustrates, sure, His prime design; each joy must be abjure Even for love of it.

He laughed: what sage
But perishes if from his magic page
He look because, at the first line, a proof
'Twak heard salutes him from the cavern roof?
On! Give thyself, excluding aught beside,
To the day's task; compel thy slave provide
Its utmost at the soonest; turn the leaf
Thoroughly conned; these lays of thine, in brief—
Cannot men bear, now, something better?—fly
A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry
Of essences? the period sure has ceased
For such: present us with ourselves, at least,
Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and hates
Made flesh: wait not!

Awhile the poet waits However. The first trial was enough: He left imagining, to try the stuff That held the imaged thing and, let it writhe Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe To reach the light—his Language. How he sought The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-wrought That Language, welding words into the crude Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude Armour was hammered out, in time to be Approved beyond the Roman panoply Melted to make it, boots not. This obtained With some ado, no obstacle remained To using it; accordingly he took An action with its actors, quite for sook Himself to live in each, returned anon With the result—a creature, and by one And one proceeded leisurely equip Its limbs in harness of his workmanship. Accomplished! Listen, Mantuans! Fond essay! Piece after piece that armour broke away Because perceptions whole, like that he sought To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought As language: Thought may take Perception's place But hardly co-exist in any case, Being its mere presentment—of the Whole By Parts, the Simultaneous and the Sole By the Successive and the Many. Lacks The crowd perceptions? painfully it tacks Together thoughts Sordello, needing such, Has rent perception into: it's to clutch And reconstruct—his office to diffuse, Destroy: as difficult obtain a Muse In sport, as be Apollo. For the rest,

E'en if some wondrous vehicle exprest The whole dream, what impertinence in me So to express it, who myself can be The dream! nor, on the other hand, are those, I sing to over-likely to suppose A higher than the highest I present Now, and they praise already: be content Both parties, rather; they with the old verse, And I with the old praise—far go, fare worse! A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings The angel, sparkles off his mail, and rings Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps, As might Apollo from the sudden corpse Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless quoits. He set to celebrating the exploits Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.

Then came The world's revenge: their pleasure now his aim Merely-what was it? Not to play the fool So much as learn our lesson in your school, Replied the world: he found that every time He gained applause by any given rhyme His auditory recognised no jot As he intended, and mistaking not Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was dunce Sufficient to believe him — All at once. His Will . . . conceive it caring for his Will! -Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak, Had Montfort at completely (so to speak) His fingers' ends; while past the praise-tide swept To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept, The true meed for true merit—His abates Into a sort he most repudiates, And on them angrily he turns. Who were The Mantuans, after all, that he should care About their recognition, ay or no? In spite of the convention months ago, (Why blink the truth) was not be forced to help This same ungrateful audience, every whelp Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers With the bright band of those Goito years, As east he toiled for flower or tree? Why there Sat Palma! Adelaide's funereal hair Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed A fairy dust upon that multitude Although he feigned to take them by themselves; His giants dignified those puny elves,

Sublimed their faint applause. In short he found Himself still footing a delusive round, Remote as ever from the self-display He mount to compass, hampered every way By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then Continue, make believe to find in men A use he found not?

Weeks, months, years went by; And, lo, Sordello vanished utterly, Sundered in twain; each spectral part at strife With each; one jarred against another life; The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran Here, there; let slip no opportunities Forsooth, as pitiful beside the prize To drop on him some no-time and acquit His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit) That waiving any compromise between No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen Beyond most methods—of incurring scoff From the Man-portion not to be put off With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme Though ne'er so bright; which sauntered forth in dream, Dress'd any how, nor waited mystic frames, Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims, But just his sorry self; who yet might be Sorrier for aught he in reality Achieved, so pinioned that the Poet-part, Fondling, in turn of fancy, Verse; the Art Developing his soul a thousand ways; Potent, by its assistance, to amaze The multitude with majesties, convince Each sort of nature that same nature's prince Accosted it: language, the makeshift, grew Into a bravest of expedients, too; Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone Sufficed: while, out of dream, his day's work went To tune a crazy tenzon or sirvent— So hampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge Between the bard and the bard's audience, grudge A minute's toil that missed its due reward! But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard, John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land, That on the sea, with open in his hand A bitter-sweetling of a book—was gone. And if internal struggles to be one, That frittered him incessantly piece-meal,

Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real Mantuans! intruding ever with some call To action while he pondered, once for all, Which looked the easier effort—to pursue This course, still leap o'er paltry joys, yearn through The present ill-appreciated stage Of self-revealment and compel the age Know him; or else, forswearing bard-craft, wake From out his lethargy and nobly shake Off timid habits of denial, mix With men, enjoy like men: ere he could fix On aught, in rushed the Mantuans; much they cared For his perplexity! Thus unprepared, The obvious if not only shelter lay In deeds the dull conventions of his day Prescribed the like of him: why not be glad 'Tis settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad, Submits to this and that established rule? Let Vidal change or any other fool His murrey-coloured robe for philamot And crop his hair; so skin-deep, is it not, Such vigour? Then, a sorrow to the heart, His talk! Whatever topics they might start Had to be groped for in his consciousness Strait, and as strait delivered them by guess: Only obliged to ask himself, "What was," A speedy answer followed, but, alas, One of God's large ones, tardy to condense Itself into a period; answers whence A tangle of conclusions must be stripp'd At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipp'd, They matched rare specimens the Mantua flock Regaled him with, each talker from his stock Of sorted o'er opinions, every stage, Juicy in youth or desiccate with age, Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe-ripe, rotten-rich, Sweet-sour, all tastes to take: a practice which He too had not impossibly attained, Once either of those fancy-flights restrained; For, at conjecture how the words appear To others, playing there what passes here, And occupied abroad by what he spurned At home, 'twas slipt the occasion he returned To seize: he'd strike that lyre adroitly—speech, Would but a twenty cubit plectre reach; A clever hand, consummate instrument Were both brought close! each excellency went For nothing else. The question Naddo asked

Had just a life-time moderately tasked To answer, Naddo's fashion; more disgust And more; why move his soul, since move it must At minute's notice or as good it failed The end was, he retailed To rhove at all? Some ready-made opinion, put to use This quip, that maxim—ventured reproduce Gestures and tones—at any folly caught Serving to finish with, nor too much sought If false or true 'twas spoken; praise and blame Of what he said grew pretty well the same —Meantime awards to meantime acts: his soul, Unequal to the compassing a Whole, Saw in a tenth part less and less to strive And as for Men in turn . . . contrive About. Who could to take eternal interest In them, so hate the worst, so love the best! Though in pursuance of his passive plan He hailed, decried the proper way.

As Man
So figured he; and how as Poet? Verse
Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,
That his poor piece of daily work to do
Was not sink under any rivals; who
Loudly and long enough, without these qualms,
Tuned, from Bocafoli's stark-naked psalms,
To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,
As knops that stud some almug to the pith
Prickèd for gum, wry thence, and crinklèd worse
Than pursed up eyelids of a river-horse
Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs the breese
Ha, ha! Of course he might compete with these
But—but—

Observe a pompion-twine afloat; Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat—Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and root, The entire surface of the pool to boot.

So could I pluck a cup, put in one song A single sight, did not my hand, too strong, Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole. How should externals satisfy my soul? Why that's precise the error Squarcialupe (Hazarded Naddo) finds; the man can't stoop To sing us out, quoth he, a mere romance; He'd fain do better than the best, enhance The subjects' rarity, work problems out Therewith: now you're a bard, a bard past doubt, And no philosopher; why introduce

Crotchets like these? fine, surely, but no use In poetry—which still must be, to strike, Based upon common sense; there's nothing like Appealing to our nature! what beside Was your first poetry? No tricks were tried In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes! The man, said we, tells his own joys and woes-We'll trust him. Would you have your songs endure? Build on the human heart !-- Why to be sure Yours is one sort of heart—but I mean theirs, Ours, every one's, the healthy heart one cares To build on! Central peace, mother of strength, That's father of . . . nay, go yourself that length, Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do When they have got their calm! Nay, is it true Fire rankles at the heart of every globe? Perhaps! But these are matters one may probe Too deeply for poetic purposes: Rather select a theory that . . . yes Laugh! what does that prove? . . . stations you midway And saves some little o'er-refining. Nay, That's rank injustice done me! I restrict The poet? Don't I hold the poet picked Out of a host of warriors, statesmen—did I tell you? Very like! as well you hid That sense of power you have! True bards believe Us able to achieve what they achieve— That is, just nothing—in one point abide Profounder simpletons than all beside: Oh ay! The knowledge that you are a bard Must constitute your prime, nay sole, reward! So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe Of genius-haunters—how shall I describe What grubs or nips, or rubs, or rips—your louse For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous, Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer. Picking a sustenance from wear and tear By implements it sedulous employs To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'er-toise Sordello? fifty creepers to elude At once! They settled stanchly; shame ensued: Behold the monarch of mankind succumb To the last fool who turned him round his thumb, As Naddo styled it! 'Twas not worth oppose The matter of a moment, gainsay those He aimed at getting rid of; better think Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure to slink Back expeditiously to his safe place,

And chew the cud—what he and what his race Were really, each of them. Yet even this Conformity was partial. He would miss Some point, brought into contact with them ere Assured in what small segment of the sphere Of his existence they attended him; Whence blunders, falsehoods rectify—a grim List-slur it over! How? If dreams were tried, His will swayed sicklily from side to side Not merely neutralized his waking act But tended e'en in fancy to distract The intermediate will, the choice of means: He lost the art of dreaming: Mantua scenes Supplied a baron, say, he sung before, Handsomely reckless, full to running o'er Of gallantries; abjure the soul, content With body, therefore! Scarcely had he bent Himself in dream thus low when matter fast Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast And task it duly; by advances slight, The simple stuff becoming composite, Count Lori grew Apollo—best recall His fancy! Then would some rough peasant-Paul Like those old Ecclin confers with, glance His gay apparel o'er; that countenance Gathered his shattered fancy into one, And, body clean abolished, soul alone Sufficed the grey Paulician: by and by To balance the ethereality Passions were needed; foiled he sank again.

Meanwhile the world rejoiced ('tis time explain) Because a sudden sickness set it free From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee Hor mountain hive Romano swarmed; at once A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons Blackened the valley. I am sick too, old, Half crazed I think; what good's the Kaiser's gold To such an one? God help me! for I catch My children's greedy sparkling eyes at watch— He bears that double breastplate on, they say, So many minutes less than yesterday! Beside Monk Hilary is on his knees Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall please Exact a punishment for many things You know and some you never knew; which brings To memory, Azzo's sister Beatrix And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's And Ecelin's betrothed: the Count himself

Must get my Palma; Ghibellin and Guelf Mean to embrace each other. So began Romano's missive to his fighting-man Taurello on the Tuscan's death, away With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' lay Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap Out of Vesuvius' mount like this mishap Startled him. That accursed Vicenza! I Absent, and she selects this time to die! Ho, fellows, for Vicenza! Half a score Of horses ridden dead he stood before Romano in his reeking spurs: too late— Boniface urged me, Este could not wait, The chieftain stammered; let me die in peace— Forget me! Was it I e'er craved increase Of rule? Do you and Friedrich plot your worst Against the Father: as you found me first So leave me now. Forgive me! Palma, sure, Retain that lure--Is at Goito still. Only be pacified!

The country rung With such a piece of news: on every tongue How Ecclin's great servant, congeed off, Had done a long day's service, so might doff The green and yellow to recover breath At Mantua, whither, since Retrude's death, (The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride From Otho's house he carried to reside At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile A structure worthy her imperial style, The gardens raise, their tenantry enshring She never lived to see) although his line Was ancient in her archives and she took A pride in him, that city, nor forsook Her child though he forsook himself and spent A prowess on Romano surely meant For his own purposes—he ne'er resorts If wholly satisfied (to trust reports) With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice Were shows to greet him. Take a friend's advice, Quoth Naddo to Sordello, nor be rash Because your rivals (nothing can abash Some folks) demur that we pronounced you best To sound the great man's welcome; 'tis a test, Remember; Strojavacca looks asquint, The rough fat sloven; and there's plenty hint Your pinions have received of late a shock— Out-soar them, cobswan of the silver flock!

Sing well! A signal wonder song's no whit Facilitated.

Fast the minutes flit; Another day, Sordello finds, will bring The boldier, and he cannot choose but sing; So quits, a last shift, Mantua—slow, alone: Out of that aching brain, a very stone, Song must be struck. What occupies that front? Just how he was more awkward than his wont The night before, when Naddo, who had seen Taurello on his progress, praised the mien For dignity no crosses could affect— Such was a joy, and might not be detect A satisfaction if established joys Were proved imposture? Poetry annoys Its utmost: wherefore fret? Verses may come Or keep away! And thus he wandered, dumb Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly spent, On a blind hill-top; down the gorge he went, Yielding himself up as to an embrace; The moon came out; like features of a face A querulous fraternity of pines, Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling vines Also came out, made gradually up The picture; 'twas Goito's mountain-cup And castle. He had dropped through one defile He never dared explore, the Chief erewhile Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream, enwrapt 'Twas Apollo now they lapped Him wholly. Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant To wear his soul away in discontent Brooding on fortune's malice: heart and brain Swelled; he expanded to himself again As that thin seedling spice-tree starved and frail Pushing between cat's head or ibis' tail Crusted into the porphyry pavement smooth --Suffered remain just as it sprung to soothe The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet Well in the chilly green-glazed minaret-When rooted up the sunny day she died And flung into the common court beside Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello! Was he low muttering beneath the moon Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore, How from his purposes maintained before Only resulted wailing and hot tears. Ah, the slim castle! dwindled of late years, But more mysterious; gone to ruin—trails

Of vine thro' every loop-hole. Nought avails The night as, torch in hand, he must explore The maple chamber—did I say its floor Was made of intersecting cedar beams? Worn now with gaps so large there blew cold streams Of air quite from the dungeon; lay your ear' Close and 'tis like, one after one, you hear In the blind darkness water-drops. The nests And nooks retain their long ranged vesture-chests Empty and smelling of the iris-root The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that day, Said the remaining women. Last, he lay Beside the Carian group reserved and still. The Body, the Machine for Acting Will Had been at the commencement proved unfit; That for Reflecting, Demonstrating it, Mankind—no fitter: was the Will Itself In fault?

His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf Beside the youngest marble maid awhile; Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile, I shall be king again! as he withdrew The envied scarf; into the font he threw His crown.

Next day, no poet! Wherefore? asked Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs masked As devils ended; don't a song come next? The master of the pageant looked perplext Till Naddo's whisper came to his relief; His Highness knew what poets were: in brief, Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right To peevishness, caprice? or, call it spite, One must receive their nature in its length And breadth, expect the weakness with the strength! So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent, The easy-natured soldier smiled assent, Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin, And nodded that the bull-chase might begin.

BOOK THE THIRD.

And the font took them: let our laurels lie! Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly Because once more Goito gets, once more, Sordello to itself! A dream is o'er And the suspended life begins anew; Quiet those throbbing temples, then, subdue That cheek's distortion! Nature's strict embrace, Putting aside the past, shall soon efface Its print as well-factitious humours grown Over the true—loves, hatreds not his own— And turn him pure as some forgotten vest Woven of painted byssus, silkiest Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted lip, Left welter where a trireme let it slip I' the sea and vexed a Satrap; so the stain O' the world forsakes Sordello with its pain Its pleasure: how the tinct loosening escapes Cloud after cloud! Mantua's familiar shapes Die, fair and foul die, fading as they flit, Men, women, and the pathos and the wit, Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile or sigh For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die: The last face glances through the eglantines, The last voice murmurs 'twixt the blossomed vines This May of the Machine supplied by Thought To compass Self-perception .dly sought By forcing half himself—an insane pulse Of a God's blood on clay it could convulse Never transmute—on human sights and sounds To watch the other half with; irksome bounds It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed Forever. Better sure be unrevealed Than part revealed: Sordello well or ill Is finished with: what further use of Will --Point in the prime idea not realised, An oversight, inordinately prized No less, and pampered with enough of each Delight to prove the whole above its reach.

To need become all natures yet retain The law of one's own nature—to remain Oneself, yet yearn . . . aha, that chesnut, think, To yearn for this first larch-bloom crisp and pink, With those pale fragrant tears where zephyrs staunch March wounds along the fretted pine-tree branch! Will and the means to show will, great and small Material, spiritual, abjure them all Save any so distinct as to be left Amuse, not tempt become: and, thus bereft, Say, Just as I am fashioned would I be! Nor, Moon, is it Apollo now but me Thou visitest to comfort and befriend; Swim thou into my heart and there an end Since I possess thee! nay thus shut mine eyes And know, quite know, by that heart's fall and rise If thou dost bury thee in clouds and when Out-standest: wherefore practise upon Men To make that plainer to myself?

Slide here

Over a sweet and solitary year
Wasted: or simply notice change in him—
How eyes, bright with exploring once, grew dim
And satiate with receiving. Some distress
Occasioned, too, a sort of consciousness
Under the imbecility; nought kept
That down: he slept, but was aware he slept
And frustrate so: as who brainsick made pact
Erst with the overhanging cataract
To deafen him, yet may distinguish now
His own blood's measured clicking at his brow.

One declining Autumn day— To finish. Few birds about the heaven chill and grey, No wind that cared trouble the tacit woods-He sauntered home complacently, their moods According, his and Nature's. Every spark Of Mantua life was trodden out; so dark The embers that the Troubadour who sung Hundreds of songs forgot, its tricks the tongue, Its craft the brain, how either brought to pass Singing so e'er; that faculty might class With any of Apollo's now. The year Began to find its early promise sere As well. Thus beauty vanishes! Your stone Nature's and his youth gone, Outlasts your flesh. They left the world to you and wished you joy. When stopping his benevolent employ A presage shuddered through the welkin; harsh

The earth's remonstrance followed. 'Twas the marsh Gone of a sudden. Mincio in its place Laughed a broad water in next morning's face And, where the mists broke up immense and white I' the steady wind, burned like a spilth of light Out of the crashing of a myriad stars. And here was Nature, bound by the same bars Of fate with him!

No: youth once gone is gone Deeds let escape are never to be done: Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year, but us— Oh forfeit I unalterably thus My chance? nor two lives wait me, this to spend Learning save that? Nature has leisure mend Mistake, occasion, knows she will recur-Landslip or seabreach how affects it her With her magnificent resources? I Must perish once and perish utterly! Not any strollings now at even-close Down the field-path, Sordello, by thorn-rows Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of fire And dew, outlining the black cypress' spire She waits you at, Elys, who heard you first Woo her the snow-month—ah, but ere she durst Answer 'twas April! Linden-flower-time-long Her eyes were on the ground; 'tis July, strong Now; and because white dust-clouds overwhelm The woodside, here or by the village elm That holds the moon she meets you, somewhat pale, But letting you lift up her coarse flax veil And whisper (the damp little hand in yours) Of love-heart's love-your heart's love that endures Till death. Tush! No mad mixing with the rout Of haggard ribalds wandering about The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse Parading to the gay Palermitans, Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans From Nuocera, those tall grave dazzling Norse, Clear-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than the morse, Queens of the caves of jet stalactites He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas, The blind night seas without a saving-star, And here in snowy birdskin robes they are, Sordello, here, mollitious alcoves gilt Superb as Byzant-domes that devils built - Ah, Byzant, there again! no chance to go Ever like august pleasant Dandolo,

Worshipping hearts about him for a wall, Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and all, Through vanquished Byzant to have noted him What pillar, marble massive, sardius slim, 'Twere fittest we transport to Venice' Square-Flattered and promised life to touch them there Soon, by his fervid sons of senators! No more lifes, deaths, loves, hatreds, peaces, wars— Ah, fragments of a Whole ordained to be! Points in the life I waited! what are ye But roundels of a ladder which appeared Awhile the very platform it was reared To lift me on—that Happiness I find Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind Instinct which bade forego you all unless Ye led me past yourselves? Ay, Happiness Awaited me; the way life should be used Was to acquire, and deeds like you conduced To teach it by a self-revealment (deemed That very use too long). Whatever seemed Progress to that was Pleasure; aught that stayed My reaching it—No Pleasure. I have laid The roundels down; I climb not; still aloft The platform stretches! Blisses strong and soft I dared not entertain elude me: vet Never of what they promised could I get A glimpse till now! The common sort, the crowd. Exist, perceive; with Being are endowed, However slight, distinct from what they See, However bounded: Happiness must be To feed the first by gleanings from the last, Attain its qualities, and slow or fast Become what they behold; such peace-in-strife By transmutation is the Use of Life, The Alien turning Native to the soul Or body—which instructs me; I am whole There and demand a Palma; had the world Been from my soul to a like distance hurled 'Twere Happiness to make it one with me— Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be, Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend In spirit now; and this done, what's to blend With? Nought is Alien here—my Will Owns all already; yet can turn it still Less Native, since my Means to correspond With Will are so unworthy 'twas my bond To tread the very ones that tantalize Me now into a grave, never to rise—

I die then! Will the rest agree to die? Next Age or no? Shall its Sordello try Clue after clue and catch at last the clue I miss, that's underneath my finger too, Twice, thrice a day, perhaps,—some yearning traced Deeper, some petty consequence embraced Closer! Why fled I Mantua then? Complained So much my Will was fettered, yet remained Content within a tether half the range I could assign it?—able to exchange My ignorance, I felt, for knowledge, and Idle because I could thus understand— Could e'en have penetrated to its core Our mortal mystery, and yet forbore, Preferred elaborating in the dark My casual stuff, by any wretched spark Born of my predecessors, tho' one stroke Of mine had brought the flame forth! Mantua's yoke, My minstrel's-trade, was to behold mankind, And my own matter just to bring my mind Behold, just extricate, for my acquist, Each object suffered stifle in the mist Convention, hazard, blindness could impose In their relation to myself.

He rose. The level wind carried above the firs Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,

Onward.

Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,
Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid drops
Under a humid finger; while there fleets
Outside the screen a pageant time repeats
Never again! To be deposed—immured
Clandestinely—still petted, still assured
To govern were fatiguing work—the Sight
Fleeting meanwhile! 'Tis noontide—wreak ere night
Somehow one's will upon it rather! Slake
This thirst somehow, the poorest impress take
That serves! A blasted bud displays you, torn,
Faint rudiments of the full flower unborn;
But who divines what petal coats o'erclasp
Of the bulb dormant in the Munnny's grasp
Taurello sent . . .

Taurello? Palma sent Your Trouvere, (Naddo interposing leant Over the lost bard's shoulder) and believe, You cannot more reluctantly conceive Than I pronounce her message: we depart

Together: what avail a poet's heart Verona and her gauds? five blades of grass Suffice him. News? Why, where your marish was. On its mud-banks smoke rises after smoke I' the valley like a spout of hell new-broke. Oh, the world's tidings! little thanks, I guess, The father of our Patroness, For them. Playing Taurello an astounding trick, Parts between Ecelin and Alberic His wealth and goes into a convent: both Wed Guelfs: the Count and Palma plighted troth A week since at Verona: and she wants You doubtless to contrive the marriage-chants Ere Richard storms Ferrara. Your response To Palma? Wherefore jest? Depart at once? A good resolve! In truth I hardly hoped So prompt an acquiescence. Have you groped Out wisdom in the wilds here? - Thoughts may be Over-poetical for poetry? Pearl-white you minstrels liken Palma's neck, And yet what spoils an orient like some speck Of genuine white turning its own white grey? You take me? Curse the cicales!

One more day....

One eve-appears Verona! Many a group, (You mind) instructed of the osprey's swoop On lynx and ounce, was gathering--Christendom Sure to receive, whate'er it might be, from The evening's purpose cheer or detriment Since Friedrich only waited some event Like this of Ghibellins establishing Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King Of Lombardy, he'd glad descend there, wage Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage His barons from the burghers, and restore The rule of Charlemagne broken of yore By Hildebrand. That eve-long each by each Sordello sate and Palma: little speech At first in that dim closet, face with face Despite the tumult in the market place Exchanging quick low laughters: now would gush Word upon word to meet a sudden flush, A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise— But for the most part their two histories Ran best thro' the locked fingers and linked arms. And so the night flew on with its alarms Till in burst one of Palma's retinue; Now, Lady, gasped he. Then arose the two

And leaned into Verona's air dead still.

A balcony lay black beneath until
Out 'mid a gush of torchfire, grey-haired men
Came on it and harangued the people: then
Sea like that people surging to and fro
Shouted, Hale forth the Carroch—trumpets, ho,
A flourish! run it in the ancient grooves—
Back from the bell! Hammer! that whom behooves
May hear the League is up! Peal! learn who list,
Verona means not be the first break tryst
To-morrow with the League.

Enough. Now turn-

Over the Eastern cypresses: discern Is any beacon set a-glimmer?

Rang
The air with shouts that overpowered the clang
Of the incessant carroch even. Haste—
The Candle's at the gate-way! ere it waste
Each soldier stands beside, armed fit to march
With Tiso Sampier through that Eastern arch!
Ferrara's succoured, Palma!

Once again They sate together; some strange thing in train To say, so difficult was Palma's place In taking, with a coy fastidious grace Like the bird's flutter ere it fix and feed; But when she felt she held her friend indeed Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant Her lessons; telling of another want Goito's quiet nourished than his own; Palma—to serve, as him—be served, alone Importing; Agnes' milk so neutralised The blood of Ecclin. Nor be surprised If, while Sordello nature captive led, In dream was Palma wholly subjected To some out-soul which dawned not though she pined Delaying still (pursued she) heart and mind To live: how dared I let expand the force Within me till some out-soul whose resource It grew for should direct it? Every law Of life, its fitnesses and every flaw, Must that determine whose corporeal shape Would be no other than the prime escape And revelation to me of a Will Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable Above except the point I was to know Shone that myself, my powers, might overflow So far, so much; as now it signified Which earthly shape it henceforth chose to guide

Me by whose lip selected to declare Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear: -The first of intimations, whom to love; The next, how love him. And that orb above The castle-covert and the mountain-close Slow in appearing, if beneath arose Cravings, aversions, and our green precinct Take pride in me at unawares distinct With this or that endowment, how represt At once such jetting power shrank to the rest! Was I to have a chance touch spoil me, leave My spirit thence unfitted to receive The consummating spell?—that spell so near Moreover: waits he not the waking year? His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe By this; to welcome him fresh runnels stripe The thawed ravines; because of him the wind Walks like a herald. I shall surely find Him now!

And chief that earnest April morn
Of Richard's Love-court was it time, so worn
And white her cheek, so idly her blood beat,
Sitting that morn beside the Lady's feet
And saying as she prompted; till outburst
One face from all the faces—not then first
She knew it; where in maple-chamber glooms,
Crowned with what sanguine-heart pomegranate blooms
Advanced it ever? Men's acknowledgment
Sanctioned her own: 'twas taken, Palma's bent,
She said.

And day by day the Tuscan dumb Sat scheming, scheming; Ecclin would come Gaunt, scared, Cesano baffles me, he'd say: Better I fought it out my father's way! Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats And you and your Taurello yonder-what's Romano's business there? An hour's concern To cure the froward Chief!-induced return Much heartened from those overmeaning eyes. Wound up to persevere, his enterprise Marked out anew, its exigent of wit Apportioned, she at liberty to sit And scheme against the next emergence, I— To covet what I deemed their sprite, made fly Or fold the wing—to con your horoscope For leave command those steely shafts shoot ope Or straight assuage their blinding eagerness To blank smooth snow: what semblance of success

To any of my plans for making you Romano's lord? That chief—her children too— There Salinguerra would obstruct me sheer, And the insuperable Tuscan here Stayed me! But one wild eve that Lady died In her lone chamber: only I beside: Taurello far at Naples, and my sire At Padua, Ecelin away in ire With Alberic: she held me thus—a clutch To make our spirits as our bodies touch— And so began flinging the past up, heaps Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps Within her soul; deeds rose along with dreams, Fragments of many miserable schemes, Secrets, more secrets, then—no, not the last— 'Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the past, How . . . ay, she told me, gathering her face That face of hers into one arch-grimace To die with . .

Friend, 'tis gone! but not the fear Of that fell laughing, heard as now I hear. Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart grow weak, When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to speak —Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark, for in Rushed o' the very instant Ecelin (How summoned who divines?) looking as if Part understood he why his mate lay stiff Already in my arms, for, Girl, how must I manage Este in the matter thrust Upon me, how unravel their bad coil? Since (he declared) 'tis on your brow—a soil Like hers there! then said in a breath he lacked No counsel after all, had signed no pact With devils, nor was treason here or there, Goito or Vicenza, his affair: He'd bury it in Adelaide's deep grave And begin life afresh, nor, either, slave For any Friedrich's or Taurello's sake! What booted him to meddle or to make In Lombardy? 'Twas afterward I knew The meaning of his promise to undo All she had done—why marriages were made, New friendships entered on, old followers paid With curses for their pains, people's amaze At height, when, passing out by Gate St. Blaise He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his head Over a friar's neck, had vowed, he said, Long since, nigh thirty years, because his wife

And child were saved there, to bestow his life On God, his gettings on the Church.

Exiled Within Goito, still that dream beguiled Her days and hights; 'twas found the orb she sought To serve, those glimpses came of Fomalhaut, No other: how then serve it?—authorise Him and Romano mingle destinies? And straight Romano's angel stood beside Her who had else been Boniface's bride, For Salinguerra 'twas, the neck low bent, And voice lightened to music as he meant To learn not teach me how Romano waxed, Wherefore it waned and why if I relaxed My grasp (think's I!) would drop a thing effete, Frayed by itself, unequal to complete The course and counting every step astray A gain so much. Romano every way Stable, a House now—why this starting back Into the very outset of its track? This recent patching principle allied Our House with other Houses—what beside Concerned the apparition, you grim Knight Who followed Conrad hither in such plight His utmost wealth was reckoned in his steed? For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed A task in the beginning hazardous To him as ever task can be to us. But did the weather-beaten thief despair When first our crystal cincture of warm air, That binds the Trivisan as its spice-belt (Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus dwelt, Furtive he pierced and Este was to face— Despaired Saponian Strength of Lombard Grace? Said he for making surer aught made sure, Maturing what already was mature? No; his heart prompted Ecclo, Confront Este, inspect yourself. What's nature? Discard three-parts your nature and adopt The rest as an advantage! Old Strength propped The earliest of Podestas among The Vincentines, no less than, while there sprung His Palace up in Padua like a threat, Their noblest spied a Grace unnoticed yet In Conrad's crew. Thus far the object gained, Romano was established; has remained-For are you not Italian, truly peer With Este? Azzo better soothes it ear*

Than Alberic? or is this lion's-crine From over-mount (this yellow hair of mine) So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock? (Thus went he on with something of a mock) Wherefore recoil then from the very fate Conseded you, refuse to imitate Your model farther? Este long since left Being mere Este: as a blade its heft, Este requires the Pope to further him: And you, the Kaiser: whom your father's whim Foregoes or, better, never shall forego If Palma dares pursue what Ecelo Commenced but Ecclin desists from: just As Adelaide of Susa could intrust Her donative (that's Piedmont to the Pope, The Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope "I wixt France and Italy) to the superb Matilda's perfecting,—lest aught disturb Our Adelaide's great counter-project for Giving her Trentine to the Emperor With passage here from Germany, shall you Take it, my slender plodding talent, too— Urged me Taurello with his half-smile.

He

As Patron of the scattered family Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in bruit Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit Until, the Kaiser excommunicate, Nothing remains, Taurello said, but wait Some rash procedure: Palma was the link, As Agnes' child, between us, and they shrink From losing Palma: judge if we advance Your father's method your inheritance! The day she was betrothed to Boniface At Padua by Taurello's self, took place The outrage of the Ferrarese: again, That day she sought Verona with the train Agreed for, by Taurello's policy Convicting Richard of the fault, since she Were present to annul or to confirm, Richard, whose patience had outstayed its term, Quitted Verona for the siege.

And now What glory may engird Sordello's brow For this? A month since Oliero sunk All Ecelin that was into a Monk; But how could Salinguerra so forget His liege of thirty summers as grudge ye

One effort to recover him? He sent Forthwith the tidings of the Town's event To Oliero, adding, he, despite The recent folly, recognised his right To order such proceedings: should be wring Its uttermost advantage out, or fling This chance away? If not him, who was Head Now of the House? Through me that missive sped My father's answer will by me return. Behold! For him, he writes, no more concern With strife than for his children with the plots Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he blots For aye: Taurello shall no more subserve, Nor Ecelin impose! Lest this unnerve Him therefore at this juncture, slack his grip Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip, I, in his sons' default (who, mating with Este, forsake Romano as the frith Its mainsca for the firmland that makes head Against) I stand, Romano; in their stead Assume the station they desert, and give Still, as the Kaiser's Representative, Taurello licence he demands. Midnight— Morning—by noon to-morrow, making light Of the League's issue, we, in some gay weed Like yours disguised together, may precede The arbitrators to Ferrara; reach Him, let Taurello's noble accents teach The rest! then say if I have misconceived Your destiny, too readily believed The Kaiser's cause your own!

And Palma's fled. Though no affirmative disturbs the head A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er Like the alighted planet Pollux wore, Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy, Soul to their body—have their aggregate Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate Though he should live, a centre of disgust Even, apart, core of the outward crust He vivifies, assimilates. For thus Bring I Sordello to the rapturous Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one round Of life was quite accomplished and he found Not only that a soul, howe'er its might, Is insufficient to its own delight, Both in corporeal organs and in skill

By means of such to body forth its Will— And, after, insufficient to apprise Men of that Will, oblige them recognise The Hid by the Revealed—but that,—the last Nor lightest of the struggles overpast, His Will, bade abdicate, which would not void The throne, might sit there, suffer he enjoyed The same a varied and divine array Incapable of homage the first way Nor fit to render incidentally Tribute connived at, taken by the by. In joys: and if, thus warranted rescind The ignominious exile of mankind Whose proper service, ascertained intact As yet (by Him to be themselves made act, Not watch Sordello acting each of them) Was to secure—if the true diadem Seemed imminent while our Sordello drank The wisdom of that golden Palma, thank Verona's Lady in her Citadel Founded by Gaulish Brennus legends tell— And truly when she left him the sun reared A head like the first clamberer's that peered A-top the Capitol, his face on flame With triumph, triumphing till Manlius came. Nor slight too much my rhymes—" that spring, dispread, Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead Like an escape of angels!" Rather say My transcendental platan! mounting gay (An archimage so courts a novice-queen) With tremulous silvered trunk, whence branches sheen Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver soon With coloured buds, then glowing like the moon One mild flame, last a pause, a burst, and all Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall, Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-dust, Ending the weird work prosecuted just For her amusement; he decrepit, stark, Dozes; her uncontrolled delight may mark Apart-

Yet not so, surely never so!
Only as good my soul were suffered go
O'er the lagune: forth fare thee, put aside
Entrance thy synod, as a God may glide
Out of the world he fills and leave it mute
A myriad ages as we men compute,
Returning into it without a break
I' the consciousness! They sleep, and I awake
O'er the lagune.

Sordello said once, note In just such songs as Eglamor, say, wrote With heart and soul and strength, for he believed Himself achieving all to be achieved By singer—in such songs you find alone Completeness, judge the song and singer One And either's purpose answered, his in it Or its in him: while from true works (to wit Sordello's dream-performances that will Be never more than dream) escapes there still Some proof the singer's proper life's beneath The life his song exhibits, this a sheath To that; a passion and a knowledge far Transcending these, majestic as they are, Smoulder; his lay was but an episode In the bard's life. Which evidence you owed To some slight weariness, a looking-off Or start away, the childish skit or scoff In "Charlemagne," for instance, dreamed divine In every point except one restive line Those daughters!—what significance may lurk In that? My life commenced before that work, Continues after it, as on I fare With no more stopping possibly, no care To jot down (says the bard) the why and how And where and when of life, as I do now: But shall I cease to live for that? For you! who sigh, when shall it come to pass We read that story, when will be compress The future years, his whole life's business, Into another lay which that one flout, Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out Engrosses him already while professed To meditate with us eternal rest? Strike sail, slip cable! here the galley's moored For once, the awning's stretched, the poles assured: Noontide above; except the wave's crisp dash, Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise' splash, The margin's silent; out with every spoil Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil, This serpent of a river to his head I' the midst! Admire each treasure as we spread The turf to help us tell our history Aright: give ear then, gentles, and descry The groves of giant rushes how they grew Like demons' endlong tresses we sailed through, What mountains yawned, forests to give us vent Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went

Till . . . may that beetle (shake your cap) attest The springing of a land-wind from the West! Wherefore? Ah yes, you frolic it to-day: To-morrow, and the pageant's moved away Down to the poorest tent-pole: we and you Part company: no other may pursue Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate Intends, if triumph or decline await The tempter of the everlasting steppe. I sung this on an empty palace-step At Venice: why should I break off, nor sit Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit England gave birth to? Who's adorable Enough reclaim a —— no Sordello's Will Alack !—be queen to me? That Bassanese Busied among her smoking fruit-boats? Perhaps from our delicious Asolo Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico Not prettier, bind late lilies into sheaves To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping leaves Soiled by their own loose gold-meal? Ah, beneath The cool arch stoops she, brownest-cheek! Her wreath Endures a month—a half-month—if I make

A queen of her, continue for her sake
Sordello's story? Nay, that Paduan girl
Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl
In the dead black Giudecca proves sea-weed
Drifting has sucked down three, four, all indeed
Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue turbaned post

For gondolas.

You sad dishevelled ghost That pluck at me and point, are you advised I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised —Jewels in the locks that love no crownet like Their native field-buds and the green wheat spike, So fair!—Who left this end of June's turmoil, Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil, Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free Came join the peasants o'er the kissing sea.) Look they too happy, too tricked out? Confess You have so niggard stock of happiness To share that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch, One labours ineffectually stretch It o'er you so that mother, children, both May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth! No: tear the robe yet farther: be content With seeing some few score pre-eminent Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy wights.

Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights-(At home we dizen scholars, chiefs and kings, But in this magic weather hardly clings The old garb gracefully: Venice a type Of Life, 'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe, As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt nought and nought: 'Tis Venice, and 'tis Life—as good you sought To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone Or stay me thrid her cross canals alone, As hinder Life what seems the single good Sole purpose, one thing to be understood Of Life)—best, be they Peasants, be they Queens, Take them, I say made happy any means, Parade them for the common credit, youch A luckless residue we send to crouch In corners out of sight was just as framed For happiness, its portion might have claimed And so, could we concede, that portion, stalked Fastuous as any—such my project, baulked Already; hardly venture I adjust A lappet when I find you! To mistrust Me! nor unreasonably. You, no doubt, Have the true knack of tiring suitors out With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes Inveterately tear-shot—there, be wise Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant You insult! Shall your friend (not slave) be shent For speaking home? Beside care-bit erased Broken-up beauties ever took my taste Supremely, and I love you more, far more That her I looked should foot Life's temple-floor— Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where A whisper came, Seek others, since thy care Is found, thy life's provision; if a race Should be thy mistress, and into one face The many faces crowd? Ah, had I, judge, Or no, your secret 2 Rough apparel—grudge All ornaments save tag or tassel worn To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn-Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go Alone (that's saddest but it must be so) Through Venice, sing now and now glance aside, Aught desultory or undignified, And, ravishingest lady, will you pass Or not each formidable group, the mass Before the Basilike (that feast gone by, God's day, the great June Corpus Domini) And wistfully foregoing proper men,

Come timid up to me for alms? And then The luxury to hesitate, feign do Some unexampled grace, when whom but you Dare I bestow your own upon? And hear Me out before you say it is to sneer I call you ravishing, for I regret Little that she, whose early foot was set Forth as she'd plant it on a pedestal, Now i' the silent city, seems to fall Towards me—no wreath, only a lip's unrest To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed Dry of their tears upon my bosom: strange Such sad chance should produce in thee such change, My love! warped men, souls, bodies! yet God spoke Of right-hand foot and eye—selects our yoke, Sordello I as your poetship may find: So sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind Their foolish talk; we'll manage reinstate The matter; ask moreover, when they prate Of evil men past hope, don't each contrive Despite the evil you abuse to live? Keeping, each losel, thro' a maze of lies, His own conceit of truth? to which he hies By obscure tortuous windings, if you will, But to himself not inaccessible: He sees it, and his lies are for the crowd Who cannot see; some fancied right allowed His vilest wrong, empowered the fellow clutch One pleasure from the multitude of such Denied him: then assert, all men appear To think all better than themselves, by here Trusting a crowd they wrong; but really, say, All men think all men stupider than they Since save themselves no other comprehends The complicated scheme to make amends -Evil, the scheme by which, thro' Ignorance Good labours to exist. A slight advance Merely to find the sickness you die through And nought beside: but if one can't eschew One's portion in the common lot, at least One can avoid an ignorance increased Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint How nought is like dispensing without stint The water of life—so easy to dispense Beside, when one has probed the centre whence Commotion's born—could tell you of it all -Meantime, just meditate my madrigal O' the mugwort that conceals a dewdrop safe!

What, dullard? we and you in smothery chafe Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin The Horrid, getting neither out nor in, A hungry sun above us, sands among Our throats, each dromedary lolls a tongue, Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap, And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke, Remark, you wonder any one needs choke With founts about! Potsherd him. Gibeonites, While awkwardly enough your Moses smites The rock though he forego his Promised Land, Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and Dance, forsooth, Metaphysic Poet . . . ah Mark ye the dim first oozings? Meribah! And quaffing at the fount my courage gained Recall—not that I prompt ye—who explained . . . Presumptuous! interrupts one. You not I 'Tis Brother, marvel at and magnify Mine office: office, quotha? can we get To the beginning of the office yet? What do we here? simply experiment Each on the other's power and its intent When elsewhere tasked, if this of mine were trucked For Thine to either's profit,—watch construct, In short, an engine: with a finished one What it can do is all, nought how 'tis done; But this of ours yet in probation, dusk A kernel of strange wheelwork thro' its husk Grows into shape by quarters and by halves; Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that valve's Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device, Make out each other more or less precise— The scope of the whole engine's to be proved— We die: which means to say the whole's removed Dismounted wheel by wheel that complex gin To be set up anew elsewhere, begin A task indeed but with a clearer clime Than the murk lodgment of our building-time: And then, I grant you, it behoves forget How 'tis done—all that must amuse us yet So long: and while thou turnest on thy heel Pray that I be not busy slitting steel Or shredding brass upon a virgin shore Under a cluster of fresh stars, before I name a tithe the wheels I trust to do! So occupied, then, are we: hitherto, At present, and a weary while to come,

The office of ourselves nor blind nor dumb And seeing somewhat of man's state, has been, The worst of us, to say they so have seen: The better, what it was they saw; the best, Impart the gift of seeing to the rest: So that I glance, says such an one, around, And there's no face but I can read profound Disclosures in; this stands for hope, that—fear, And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here! Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts O'erarch, will blind thee! said I not? she shuts Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet! Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er, Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore Thy sweet shape, Elys! therefore stoop-

That's truth!

(Applaud you) the incarcerated youth Would say that!

Youth? Plara the bard? set down That Plara spent his youth in a grim town Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about The minster for protection, never out Of its black belfry's shadow or bells' roar: Brighter the sun illumed the suburbs, more Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof For any chance escape of joy some roof Taller than they allowed the rest detect Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect Who could, 'twas meant for laughter, that ploughed cheek's Repulsive gleam!) when the sun stopped both peaks Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge, Then sank, a huge flame on its socket's edge, Whose leavings on the grey glass oriel-pane Were ghastly some few minutes more: no rain— The Minster minded that! in heaps the dust Lay every where: that town, the Minster's trust, Held Plara; who, its denizen, bade hail In twice twelve sonnets, Naddo Tempe's vale.

Exact the town, the minster and the street!
As all mirth triumphs, sadness means defeat:
Lust triumphs and is gay, Love's triumphed o'er
And sad: but Lucio's sad: I said before
Love's sad, not Lucio; one who loves may be
As gay his love has leave to hope, as he
Downcast that lusts' desire escapes the springe:
'Tis of the mood itself I speak, what tinge
Determines it. else colourless, or mirth,

Or melancholy, as from Heaven or Earth. Ay, that's the variation's gist! Indeed? Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed! And having seen too what I saw, be bold Enough encounter what I do behold (That's sure) but you must take on trust! Attack The use and purpose of such sights! Alack, Not so unwisely hastes the crowd dispense On Salinguerras praise in preference To the Sordellos: men of action these! Who seeing just as little as you please Yet turn that little to account; engage With, do not gaze at; carry on a stage The work o' the world, not merely make report The work existed ere their time -In short, When at some future no-time a brave band Sees, using what it sees, then shake my hand In heaven, my brother! Meanwhile where's the hurt Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert At whose defection mortals stare aghast As though Heaven's bounteous windows were slammed fast Incontinent? whereas all you beneath Should scowl at, curse them, bruise lips, break their teeth Who ply the pullies for neglecting you: And therefore have I moulded, made anew A Man, delivered to be turned and tried. Be angry with or pleased at. On your side Have ye times, places, actors of your own? Try them upon Sordello once full-grown, And then—ah then! If Hercules first parched His foot in Egypt only to be marched A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit, What chance have I? The demigod was mute Till at the altar, where time out of mind Such guests became oblations, chaplets twined His forehead long enough, and he began Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man-Take not affront, my gentle audience! whom No Hercules shall make his hecatomb Believe, none from his brows your chaplet rend-That's your kind suffrage, yours, yes, yours, my friend Whose great verse blares unintermittent on Like any trumpeter at Marathon, He'll testify who when Platæas grew scant Put up with Ætna for a stimulant! And well too, I acknowledged, as it loomed Over the Midland sea that morn, presumed All day, demolished by the blazing West

At eve, while towards it, tilting cloudlets prest Like Persian ships for Salamis. Friend, wear A crest proud as desert while I declare Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring A tear its colour from that painted king To lose, I would, for that one smile which went To my heart, fling it in the sea content Wearing your verse in place, an amulet Sovereign against low-thoughtedness and fret! My English Eyebright, if you are not glad That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad Disheveled form wherein I put mankind To come at times and keep my pact in mind Renewed me,—hear no crickets in the hedge Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge At home, and may the summer showers gush Without a warning from the missel thrush! For, Eyebright, what I sing's the fate of such As find our common nature (overmuch Despised because restricted and unfit To bear the burthen they impose on it) Cling when they would discard it; craving strength To leap from the allotted world, at length 'Tis left—they floundering without a term Each a God's germ, but doomed remain a germ In unexpanded infancy, assure Yourself, nor misconceive my portraiture Nor undervalue its adornments quaint! What seems a fiend perchance may prove a saint: Ponder a story ancient pens transmit, Then say if you condemn me or acquit. John the Beloved, banished Antioch For Patmos, bade collectively his flock Farewell but set apart the closing eve To comfort some his exile most would grieve He knew: a touching spectacle, that house In motion to receive him! Xanthus' spouse You missed, made panther's meat a month since; but Xanthus himself (for 'twas his nephew shut 'Twixt boards and sawn asunder) Polycarp, Soft Charicle next year no wheel could warp To swear by Cæsar's fortune, with the rest Were ranged; thro' whom the grey disciple prest Busily blessing right and left, just stopt To put one infant's curls the hangman cropt Soon after, reached the portal; on its hinge The door turns and he enters—what deep twinge Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes fix

Whereon? How like some spectral candlestick's Branch the disciple's arms! Dead swooned he, woke Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp heart-broke Get thee behind me Satan! have I toiled

To no more purpose? is the gospel foiled
Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus' hearth,
Pourtrayed with sooty garb and features swarth—
Ah Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled
To see the—the—the Devil domiciled?
Whereto sobbed Xanthus, Father, 'tis yourself
Installed, a limning which our utmost pelf
Went to procure against to-morrow's loss,
And that's no twy-prong but a pastoral cross
You're painted with! The puckered brows unfold—
And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case: The lady-city, for whose sole embrace Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their arms A brawny mischief to the fragile charms They tugged for—one discovering to twist Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist Secured a point of vantage—one, how best He'd parry that by planting in her breast His elbow-spike--both parties too intent For noticing, howe'er the battle went, Its conqueror would have a corpse to kiss. May Boniface be duly dammed for this! Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he turned, From the wet heap of rubbish where they burned His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth: A boon, sweet Christ--let Salinguerra seethe In hell for ever, Christ, and let myself Be there to laugh at him! mound some young Guelf Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed fast To the charred lintel of the doorway last His father stood within to bid him speed. The thoroughfares were overrun with weed -Docks, quitchgrass, loathly mallows no man plan The stranger none of its inhabitants Crept out of doors to taste fresh air again, And ask the purpose of a sumptuous train Admitted on a morning; every town Of the East League was come by envoy down To treat for Richard's ransom: here you saw The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross On its white field: a-tiptoe o'er the fosse Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully After the flock of steeples he might spy In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago To mend the ramparts—sure the laggards know

The Pope's as good as here! They paced the streets More soberly. At last, Taurello greets The League, announced a pursuivant,—will match Its courtesy, and labours to despatch At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent On pressing matters from his post at Trent With Mainard Count of Tyrol,—simply waits Their going to receive the delegates. Tito! Our delegates exchanged a glance, And, keeping the main way, admired askance The lazy engines of outlandish birth Couched like a king each on its bank of earth-Arbalist, manganel and catapult; While stationed by, as waiting a result, Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased Working to watch the strangers—this, at least, Were better spared; he scarce presumes gainsay The League's decision! Get our friend away And profit for the future: how else teach Azzo 'tis not so safe within claw's reach Till Salinguerra's final gasp be blown? Those mere convulsive scratches find the bone —Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's nare? The carrochs halted in the public square. Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt, Men prattled, freelier than the crested gaunt White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak Was missing; whosoever chose might speak Ecelin boldly out: so, Ecelin Needed his wife to swallow half the sin And sickens by himself: the devil's whelp He styles his son dwindles away, no help From conserves, your fine triple-curded froth Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper broth-Eh? Jubilate! Tush! no little word You utter here that's not distinctly heard At Oliero: he was absent sick When we besieged Bassano—who i' the thick O' the work perceived the progress Azzo made Like Ecelin? through his witch Adelaide Who managed it so well that night by night At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-sprite First fresh, pale by-and-by without a wound, And when he came with eyes filmed as in swound They knew the place was taken—Ominous Your Ghibellins should get what cautelous Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to wrench Vainly; St. George contrived his town a trench

O' the marshes, an impermeable bar: Young Ecelin is meant the tutelar Of Padua rather; veins embrace upon His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion . . . What now? The founts! God's bread, touch not a plank! A grawling hell of carrion—every tank Choke-full! found out just now to Cino's cost— The same who gave Taurello's side for lost. And, making no account of fortune's freaks, Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks Back now with Concorezzi-'faith! they drag Their carroch to San Vital, plant the flag On his own Palace so adroitly razed He knew it not; a sort of Guelf folk gazed And laughed apart; Cino disliked their air-Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care— Seats himself on the tank's edge—will begin To hum, za za, Cavaler Ecclin— A silence; he gets warmer, clinks to chime, Now both feet plough the ground, deeper each time, At last, za za, and up with a fierce kick Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick Grey hair about his spur!

Which means, they lift The covering Taurello made a shift To stretch upon the truth; as well avoid Further disclosures; leave them thus employed. Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace, And poor Ferrara puts a softened face On her misfortunes, save one spot—this tall Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall Bastioned within by trees of every sort On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short, (Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped, The fig-tree reared itself,) but stark and cramped, Made fools of; whence upon the very edge, Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth one ledge Of shade, are shrubs inserted, warp and woof, Which smother up that variance. Scale the roof Of solid tops and o'er the slope you slide Down to a grassy space level and wide, Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease, Set by itself; and in the centre spreads, Born upon three uneasy leopards' heads, A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirt Of water bubbles in: the walls begirt With trees leave off on either hand: pursue

Your path along a wondrous avenue Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone, With aloes leering everywhere, grey-grown From many a Moorish summer; how they wind Out of the fissures! likelier to bind The building than those rusted cramps which Arop Already in the eating sunshine. Stop Yon fleeting shapes above there! Ah, the pride Or else despair of the whole country-side-A range of statues, swarming o'er with wasps, God, goddess, woman, man, your Greek rough-rasps In crumbling Naples marble! meant to look Like those Messina marbles Constance took Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide, A certain font with caryatides Since cloistered at Goito; only, these Are up and doing, not abashed, a troop Able to right themselves—who see you, stoop O' the instant after you their arms! unplucked By this or that you pass; for they conduct To terrace raised on terrace, and, between, Creatures of brighter mould and braver mien Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle No doubt; here, left a sullen breathing-while, Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous blood Out of the eyelids just held one beneath Those shading fingers in their iron sheath, Steadied his strengths amid the buz and stir Of a dusk hideous amphitheatre At the announcement of his over-match To wind the day's diversion up, despatch Their pertinacious friend: while, limbs one heap, The Slave, no breath in her round mouth, watched leap Dart after dart forth as her hero's car Clove dizzily the solid of the war -Let coil about his knees for pride in him. We reach the farthest terrace and the grim San Pietro Palace stops us. Such the state

Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate
Sicilian marvels that his girlish wife
Retrude still might lead her ancient life.
In her new home—whereat enlarged so much
Neighbours upon the novel princely touch
He took who here imprisons Boniface.
Here must the Envoys come to sue for grace;

And here, emerging from the labyrinth Below, two minstrels pause beside the plinth Qf the door-pillar,

He had really left Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft Fram the morass) where Este's camp was made, The Envoys' march, the Legate's cavalcade— Looked cursorily o'er, but scarce as when, Eager for cause to stand aloof from men At every point save the fantastic tie Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry, He made account of such. A crowd: he meant To task the whole of it; each part's intent Concerned him therefore, and the more he pried The less became Sordello satisfied With his own figure at the moment. He respite from his task? descried he aught Novel in the anticipated sight Of all these livers upon all delight? A phalanx as of myriad points combined Whereby he still had imaged that mankind His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling, His age—in plans to show at least the thing So dreamed, but now he hastened to impress With his own will, effect a happiness From theirs,—supply a body to his soul Thence, and become eventually whole With them as he had hoped to be without— Made these the mankind he was mad about? Because a few of them were notable Must all be figured worthy note? Expect to find Taurello's triple line Of trees a single and prodigious pine. Real pines rose here and there, but, close among, Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a throng Of shrubs you saw, a nameless common sort O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report, Fast hurried into corners, or at best Admitted to be fancied like the rest. Reckon that morning's proper chiefs; how few! And yet the people grew, the people grew, Grew ever, as with many there indeed, More left behind and most who should succeed Simply in virtue of their faces, eyes, Petty enjoyments and huge miseries, Were veritably mingled with, made great Those chiefs: no overlooking Mainard's state Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead

Of stopping there, each dwindled to be head Of infinite and absent Tyrolese Or Paduans; startling too the more that these, Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared for, Yet doubtless on the whole (quoth Eglamor) Smiling—for if a wealthy man decays And out of store of such must wear all days, One tattered suit alike in sun and shade, 'Tis commonly some tarnished fine brocade Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more; Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store Of looks is fain upgather, keep unfurled For common wear as she goes through the world The faint remainder of some worn-out smile Meant for a feast-night's service merely. While Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello thus,-Crowds no way interfering to discuss Much less dispute life's joys with one employed In envying them, or, if they enjoyed, There lingered somewhat indefinable In every look and tone, the mirth as well As woe, that fixed at once his estimate Of the result, their good or bad estate-Old memories flocked but with new effect: And the new body, ere he could suspect, Cohered, mankind and he were really fused, The new self seemed impatient to be used By him, but utterly another way Than that anticipated: strange to say, They were too much below him, more in thrall Than he, the adjunct than the principal. What booted scattered brilliances?—the mind Of any number he might hope to bind And stamp with his own thought, howe'er august, If all the rest should grovel in the dust? No: first a mighty equilibrium sure To be established, privilege procure For them himself had long possessed! he felt An error, an exceeding error melt— While he was occupied with Mantuan chants Behoved him think of men and of their wants Such as he now distinguished every ride, As his own want that might be satisfied, And, after that, of wondrous qualities Of his own soul demanding exercise, And like demand it longer, nor a claim On their part, nor was virtue in the aim At serving them on his, but, past retrieve.

He in their toils felt with them, nor could leave, Wonder that in the eagerness to rule, Impress his will upon them, he the fool Had never entertained the obvious thought This last of his arrangements would be fraught With good to them as well, and he should be Rejoiced thereat; and if, as formerly, He sighed the merry time of life must fleet, 'Twas deeplier now, for could the crowds repeat Their poor experiences? His hand that shook Was twice to be deplored. The Legate, look! With eyes, like fresh-blown thrush-eggs on a thread, Faint-blue and loosely floating in his head, Large tongue, moist open mouth; and this long while That owner of the idiotic simile Serves them! He fortunately saw in time His fault however, and the office prime Includes the secondary—best accept Both offices; Taurello its adept Could teach him the preparatory one, And how to do what he had fancied done Long previously, ere take the greater task. How render then these people happy? ask The people's friends: for there must be one good, One way to it—the Cause! he understood The meaning now of Palma; else why are The great ado, the trouble wide and far, These Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard's hope Or its despair! 'twixt Emperor or Pope The confused shifting sort of Eden tale— Of hardihood recurring still to fail— That foreign interloping fiend, this free And native overbrooding Deity--Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms His presence ruined troubling through the calms Of Paradise - or, on the other hand, The Pontiff, as your Kaisers understand, That, snake-like cursed of God to love the ground, With Iulling eye breaks in the noon profound Some saving tree—who but the Kaiser drest As the dislodging angel of the pest Then yet that pest bedropt, flat head, full fold, With cornscating dower of dyes; behold The secret, so to speak, and master-spring Of the whole contest! which of them shall bring Men good—perchance the most good—ay, it may Be that; the question is which knows the way. And hereupon Count Mainard strutted past

Out of San Pietro; never looked the last
Of archers, slingers; and our friend began
To recollect strange modes of serving man—
Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,
And more: this way of theirs may, who can tell,
Need perfecting, said he: all's better solved
At once: Taurello 'twas the task devolved'
On late—confront Taurello!

And at last They did confront him. Scarcely an hour past When forth Sordello came, older by years Than at his entry. Unexampled fears Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind, mute And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute, Into Ferrara—not the empty town That morning witnessed: he went up and down Streets whence the veil was stripped shred after shred, So that in place of huddling with their dead Indoors to answer Salinguerra's ends, Its folk make shift to crawl and sit like friends With any one. A woman gave him choice Of her two daughters, the infantile voice Or dimpled knee, for half a chain his throat Was clasped with; but an archer knew the coat— Its blue cross and eight lilies, bade beware One dogging him in concert with the pair Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid his knife. Night set in early, autumn dews fell rife, And fires were kindled while the Leaguers' mass Began at every carroch—he must pass Between that kneeling people: presently The carroch of Verona caught his eye With purple trappings; silently he bent Over its fire, when voices violent Began, Affirm not whom the youth was like That, striking from the porch, I did not strike Again; I too have chesnut hair; my kin Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecelin; Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away; sing; take My glove for guerdon! and for that man's sake He turned: A song of Eglamor's! scarce named. When, Our Sordello's rather! all exclaimed; Is not Sordello famousest for rhyme? He had been happy to deny, this time; Profess as heretofore the aching head, The failing heart; suspect that in his stead Some true Apollo had the charge of them. Was champion to reward or to condemn

So his intolerable risk might shift Or share itself; but Naddo's precious gift Of gifts returned, be certain! at the close— I made that, said he to a youth who rose As if to hear: 'twas Palma through the band Conducted him in silence by the hand.

Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of Trent Gave place, remember, to the pair; who went In turn at Montelungo's visit—one After the other are they come and gone. A drear vast presence-chamber roughly set In order for this morning's use; you met The grim black twy-necked eagle, coarsely blacked With ochre on the naked wall, nor lacked There green and yellow tokens either side; But the new symbol Tito brought had tried The Legate's patience—nay, if Palma knew What Salinguerra almost meant to do Until the sight of her restored his lip A certain half-smile three months' chieftainship Had banished! Afterward the Legate found No change in him, nor asked what badge he wound And unwound carelessly! Now sate the Chief Silent as when our couple left whose brief Encounter wrought so opportune effect In thoughts he summoned not, nor would reject— Though time if ever, 'twas to pause now—fix On any sort of ending: wiles and tricks Exhausted, judge! his charge, the crazy town, Just managed to be hindered crashing down-His last sound troops ranged—care observed to post His last of the mained soldiers innermost— So much was plain enough, but somehow struck Him not before: and now with this strange luck Of Tito's news, rewarding his address So well, what thought he of? How the success With Friedrich's rescript there, would either hush Ecelin's fiercest scruples up, or flush Young Ecclin's white cheek, or, last, exempt Himself from telling what there was to tempt; No: that this minstrel was Romano's last Servant—himself the first! Could be contrast The whole! that minstrel's thirty autumns spent In doing nought, his notablest event This morning's journey hither, as we told— Who yet was lean, outworn and really old, A stammering awkward youth (scarce dared he raise His eye before that magisterial gaze)

—And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes, Cares and contrivances, yet you would say A youth 'twas nonchalantly looked away Through the embrasure northward o'er the sick Expostulating trees—so agile quick And graceful turned the head on the broad chest Encased in pliant steel, his constant vest, Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire Across the room; and, loosened of its tire Of steel, that head let see the comely brown Large massive locks discoloured as a crown Encircled them, so frayed the basnet where A sharp white line divided clean the hair; Glossy above, glossy below, it swept Curling and fine about a brow thus kept Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound: This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found, Mused of, turned over books about. Square-faced, No lion more; two vivid eyes, enchased In hollows filled with many a shade and streak Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek; Nor might the half-smile reach them that deformed A lip supremely perfect else—unwarmed, Unwidened, less or more; indifferent Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent— Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train As now: a period was fulfilled again; Such in a series made his life, compressed In each, one story serving for the rest— Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched garden-grounds Where late the adversary, breaking bounds, Procured him an occasion That above, That eagle, testified he could improve Effectually; the Kaiser's symbol lay Beside his rescript, a new badge by way Of baldric; while another thing that marred Alike emprize, achievement and reward, Ecclin's missive was conspicuous too. What a past life those flying thoughts pursue! As his no name in Mantua half so old; But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled

But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled It latterly, the Adelardi spared Few means to rival them: both factions shared Ferrara, so that, counted out, 'twould yield A product very like the city's shield, Half black and white, or Ghibelin and Guelf, As after Salinguerra styled himself

And Este who, till Marchesalla's died -Last of the Adelardi, never tried His fortune there; but Marchesalla's child Transmits (can Blacks and Whites be reconciled And young Taurello wed Linguetta) wealth And sway to a sole grasp: each treats by stealth Already: when the Guelfs, the Ravennese Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize Linguetta, and are gone! Our first dismay Abated somewhat, hurries down to lay The after indignation Boniface. No meaner spokesman: Learn the full disgrace Averted ere you blame us—wont to rate Your Salinguerra, and sole potentate That might have been, 'mongst Este's valvassors— Ay, Azzo's-who, not privy to, abhors Our step—but we were zealous. Azzo's then To do with! Straight a meeting of old men: The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere With Italy to build in, builds he here? This deemed—the other owned upon advice— A third reflected on the matter twice— In fine, young Salinguerra's staunchest friends Talked of the townsmen making him amends, Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there was Rare sport, one morning, over the morass A mile or so. He sauntered through the plain, Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again In time for Azzo's entry with the bride; Count Boniface rode smirking at his side; There's half Ferrara with her, whispers flew, And all Ancona! If the stripling knew! Anon the stripling was in Sicily Where Heinrich ruled in right of Constance; he Was gracious nor his guest incapable; Each understood the other. So it fell, One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at ease, Had near forgotten what precise degrees He crept by into such a downy seat, Over the Count trudged in a special heat To bid him of God's love dislodge from each Of Salinguerra's Palaces; a breach Might yawn else not so readily to shut, For who was just arrived at Mantua but The youngster, sword on thigh, tuft upon chin, With tokens for Celano, Ecclin, Pistore and the like! Next news: no whit Do any of Ferrara's domes befit

His wife of Heinrich's very blood: a band Of foreigners assemble, understand Garden-constructing, level and surround, Build up and bury in. A last news crowned The consternation: since his infant's birth He only waits they end his wondrous girth Of trees that link San Pietro with Tomà To visit us. When, as its Podestà Regaled him at Vicenza, Este, there With Boniface beforehand, each aware Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled A party which abetted him, but yelled Too hastily. The burning and the flight, And how Taurello, occupied that night With Ecelin, lost wife and son, were told: —Not how he bore the blow, retained his hold, Got friends safe through, left enemies the worst O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care at first-But afterward you heard not constantly Of Salinguerra's House so sure to be! Though Azzo simply gained by the event A shifting of his plagues—this one content To fall behind the other and estrange, You will not say, his nature, but so change That in Romano sought he wife and child, And for Romano's sake was reconciled To losing individual life, deep sunk, A very pollard mortised in a trunk Which Arabs out of wantonness contrive Shall dwindle that the alien stock may thrive Till forth that vine-palm feathers to the root, And red drops moisten them its arid fruit. Once set on Adelaide, the subtle mate And wholly at his beck, to emulate The Church's valiant women deed for deed. To paragon her namesake, win the meed Of its Matilda, and they overbore The rest of Lombardy—not as before By an instinctive truculence, but patched The Kaiser's strategy until it matched The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel means Only, Romano Salinguerra screens. Heinrich was somewhat of the tardiest To comprehend, nor Philip acquiesced At once in the arrangement; reasoned, plied His friend with offers of another bride, A statelier function—fruitlessly; 'tis plain Taurello's somehow one to let remain

Obscure, and Otho, free to judge of both, -Ecelin the unready, harsh and loth, And this more plausible and facile wight With every point a-sparkle—chose the right. Admiring how his predecessors harped On the wrong man: thus, quoth he, wits are warped By Jutsides! Carelessly, withal, his life Suffered its many turns of peace and strife In many lands—you hardly could surprise A man who shamed Sordello (recognise) In this as much beside, that, unconcerned, What qualities are natural or earned, With no ideal of graces; as they came He took them, singularly well the same-Speaking a dozen languages, because Your Greek cludes you, leave the least of flaws In contracts; while, through Arab lore, deter Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined for her, From Friedrich's path! Friedrich, whose pilgrimage The same man puts aside, whom he'll engage To leave next year John Brienne in the lurch, And see Bassano for St. Francis' church -Profound on Guido the Bolognian's piece That, if you lend him credit, rivals Greece— Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits Pitched home, applauding Ecclin's exploits In Paininrie. He strung the angelot; Made rhymes thereto; for prowess, clove he not Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper? why Detail you thus a varied mastery But that Taurello, ever on the watch For men, to read their hearts and thereby catch Their capabilities and purposes, Displayed himself so far as displayed these: While our Sordello only cared to know About men as a means for him to show Himself, and men were much or little worth According as they kept in or drew forth That self; the other's choicest instruments Surmised him shallow. Meantime malcontents Dropped off, town after town grew wiser; how Change the world's face? said people; as 'tis now It has been, will be ever: very fine Subjecting things profane to things divine In talk: this contumacy will fatigue The vigilance of Este and the League, Observe! accordingly, their basement sapped, Azzo and Boniface were soon entrapped

By Ponte Alto, and in one month's space Slept at Verona: either left a brace Of sons—so three years after, either's pair Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir: Azzo remained and Richard—all the stay Of Este and St. Boniface, at bay As 'twere; when either Ecelin grew old Or his brain altered—not the proper mould For new appliances—his old palm stock Endured no influx of strange strengths: he'd rock As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low As proud of the completeness of his woe, Then weep—real tears! Now make some mad onslaught On Este, heedless of the lesson taught So painfully—now cringe, sue peace, but peace At price of all advantage; therefore cease The fortunes of Romano! Up at last Rose Este and Romano sank as fast. And men remarked this sort of peace and war Commenced while Salinguerra was afar: And every friend besought him, but in vain, To wait his old adherent, call again, Taurello: not he!—who had daughters, sons, Could plot himself, nor needed any one's Advice. 'Twas Adelaide's remaining staunch Prevented his destruction root and branch Forthwith; Goito grew green above her, gay He made alliances, gave lands away To whom it pleased accept them, and withdrew For ever from the world. Taurello, who Was summoned to the convent, then refused A word—however patient, thus abused, At Este's mercy through his imbecile Ally, was fain dismiss the foolish smile, And a few movements of the happier sort Changed matters, put himself in men's report As heretofore; he had to fight, beside, And that became him ever. So in pride And flushing of this kind of second youth He dealt a good-will blow: Este in truth Was prone—and men remembered, somewhat late, A laughing old outrageous stifled hate He bore that Este—how it would outbreak At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake In sunny weather—as that noted day When with his hundred friends he offered slav Azzo before the Kaiser's face; and how On Azzo's calm refusal to allow

A liegeman's challenge straight he too was calmed: His hate, no doubt, would bear to lie embalmed, Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, to survive All intermediate crumblings, be alive At earth's catastrophe—'twas Este's crash Not Azzo's he demanded, so no rash Procedure! Este's true antagonist Rose out of Ecelin: all voices whist, All eyes were sharpened, wit predicted. Twas leaned in the embrasure presently, Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face I' the dust: and as the trees waved sere, his smile Deepened, and words expressed its thought erewhile. Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer? That we should stick together all the year I kept Vicenza!—How old Boniface, Old Azzo caught us in its market-place, He by that pillar, I this pillar, each In mid swing, more than fury of his speech, Egging our rabble on to disavow They caught us! Ecclin must turn their drudge; Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge

Allegiance to the Marquis—Bacchus, how Paying arrears of tribute due long since— Bacchus! My man, could promise then, nor wince, The bones-and-muscles! sound of wind and limb, Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him; And now he sits me, slavering and mute, Intent on chafing each starved purple foot Benumbed past aching with the altar slab— Will no vein throb there when some monk shall blab Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps Friedrich's affirmed to be our side the Alps -Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet? Sworn to abjure the world and the world's fret, God's own now? drop the dormitory bar, Enfold the scanty grey serge scapular Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories out— So! but the midnight whisper turns a shout, Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate In the stone walls: the past, the world you hate Is with you, ambush, open field—or see The surging flame—they fire Vicenza—glee! Follow, let Pilio and Bernardi chafe— Bring up the Mantuans—through San Biagio—safe! Ah, the mad people waken? Ah, they writhe And reach you? if they block the gate—no tithe

Can pass-keep back you Bassanese! the edge. Use the edge—shear, thrust, hew, melt down the wedge, Let out the black of those black upturned eyes! Hell—are they sprinkling fire too? the blood fries And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear Those upturned faces chooking with despair. Brave! Slidder through the reeking gate—how now? You six had charge of her? And then the vow Comes, and the foam spirts, hair's plucked, till one shriek (I hear it) and you fling-you cannot speak-Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who haled The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled This morn, naked across the fire: how crown The archer that exhausted lavs you down Your infant, smiling at the flame, and dies? While one, while mine.

Bacchus! I think there lies More than one corpse there (and he paced the room) -Another cinder somewhere—'twas my doom Beside, my doom: if Adelaide is dead I am the same, this Azzo lives instead Of that to me, and we pull any how Este into a heap—the matter's now At the true juncture slipping us so oft; Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you, doffed His crown at such a juncture: let but hold Our Friedrich's purpose, let this chain enfold The neck of . . . who but this same Ecelin? That must recoil when the best days begin— Recoil? that's nought; if the recoiler leaves His name for me to fight with, no one grieves! But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock His cloister to become my stumbling-block Just as of old! Ay, ay, there 'tis again— The land's inevitable Head—explain The reverences that subject us! Count These Ecclins now! not to say as fount, Originating power of thought, from twelve That drop i' the trenches they joined hands to delve Six shall surpass him, but . . . why, men must twine Somehow with something! Ecelin's a fine 'Twere simpler, doubtless, twine with me Clear name! At once: our cloistered friend's capacity Was of a sort! I had to share myself In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf That's forced illume in fifty points the vast Rare vapour he's environed by: at last My strengths, though sorely frittered, e'en converge

And crown—no, Bacchus, they have yet to urge The man be crowned!

That aloe, an he durst, Would climb! just such a bloated sprawler first I noted in Messina's castle court
The day I came, and Heinrich asked in sport
If I would pledge my faith to win him back
His right in Lombardy; for, once bid pack
Marauders, he continued, in my stead
You rule, Taurello! and upon this head
Laid the silk glove of Constance—I see her
Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,
Retrude following!

I am absolved From further toil: the empery devolved On me, 'twas Tito's word: and think, to lay For once my plan, pursue my plan my way, Prompt nobody, and render an account Taurello to Taurello! nay, I mount To Friedrich—he conceives the post I kept, Who did true service, able or inept, Who's worthy guerdon, Ecclin or I: Me guerdoned, counsel fellows; would he vie With the Pope really? Azzo, Boniface Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's race Must break ere govern Lombardy; I point How easy 'twere to twist, once out of joint, The socket from the bone; my Azzo's stare Meanwhile! for I, this idle strap to wear, Shall-fret myself abundantly, what end To serve? There's left me twenty years to spend —How better than my old way? Had I one Who laboured overthrow my work—a son Hatching with Azzo superb treachery, To root my pines up and then poison me, Beside Suppose—'twere worth while frustrate that! Another life's ordained me: the world's tide Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press Of waves, a single wave through weariness That's gently led aside, laid upon shore? My life must be lived out in foam and roar, No question. Fifty years the province held Taurello; troubles raised, and troubles quelled, He in the midst—who leaves this quaint stone place, Those trees a year or two, then, not a trace Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues Like that Sordello with the foolish songs— To which, despite our bustle, he is linked?

-Flowers one may teaze, that never seem extinct; Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair, To overawe the aloes—and we trod Those flowers, how call you such? into the sod; A stately foreigner—and worlds of pain To make it thrive, arrest rough winds—all vain! It would decline—these would not be destroyed— And now, where is it? where can you avoid The flowers? I frighten children twenty years Longer!—which way, too, Ecelin appears To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth, They prattle, at Vicenza! Fate, fate, fate, My fine Taurello! go you, promulgate Friedrich's decree, and here's shall aggrandise Young Ecelin—our Prefect's badge! a prize Too precious, certainly.

How now? Compete
With my old comrade? shufile from their seat
His children? Paltry dealing! don't I know
Ecelin? now, I think, and years ago!
What's changed—the weakness? did not I compound
For that, and undertake preserve him sound
Despite it? Say Taurello's hankering
After the boy's preferment—this play-thing
To carry, Bacchus! And he laughed.

Remark

Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort Fails: while these last are ever stopping short—(Much to be done—so little they can do!) The careless tribe see nothing to pursue Should they desist; meantime their scheme succeeds.

Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds Methodic with Taurello; so he turned. Enough amused by fancies fairly earned Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck, And Boniface completely at his beck, To his own petty but immediate doubt If he could pacify the League without Conceding Richard; just to this was brought That interval of vain discursive thought! As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot, Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black Enormous water current, his sole track To his own tribe again, where he is King;

And laughs because he guesses, numbering The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch Of the first lizard wrested from its couch Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips To cure his nostril with, and festered lips, And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert blast) That he has reached its boundary, at last May breathe; -thinks o'er enchantments of the South Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth And nails, and hair; but, these enchantments tried In fancy, puts them soberly aside For truth, cool projects a return with friends, The likelihood of winning wild amends Ere long; thinks that, takes comfort silently, And, from the river's brink, his wrongs and he, Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon.

Midnight: the watcher nodded on his spear, Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear, If any meagre and discoloured moon Should venture forth; and such was peering soon Above the harassed city—her close lanes Closer, not half so tapering her fanes, As though she shrunk into herself to keep What little life was saved more safely. By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and beside The blackest spoke Sordello and replied Palma with none to listen. 'Tis your Cause— What makes a Ghibellin? There should be laws— (Remember how my youth escaped! I trust To you for manhood, Palma; tell me just As any child)—taws secretly at work Explaining this. Assure me good may lurk Under the bad; my multitude has part In your designs, their welfare is at heart With Salinguerra, to their interest Refer the deeds he dwelt on—so divest Our conference of much that scared me: why Affect that heartless tone to Tito? Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind This morn, a recreant to that wide mankind O'erlooked till now: why boast my spirit's force, -That force denied its object? why divorce These, then admire my spirit's flight the same, As though it bore a burden which could tame No pinion, from dead void to living space? -That orb consigned to chaos and disgrace, Why vaunt complacently my frantic dance,

Making a feat's facilities enhance
The marvel? But I front Taurello, one
Of happier fate, and what I should have done,
He does; the multitude aye paramount
With him, its 'making progress may account
For his abiding still: when -but you heard
His talk with Tito—the excuse preferred
For burning those five hostages—and broached
By way of blind, as you and I approached,
I do believe.

She spoke: then he, My thought Plainer expressed! All Friedrich's profit—nought Of these meantime, of conquests to achieve For them, of wretchednesses to relieve While profiting that Friedrich. Azzo, too, Supports a cause: what is it? Guelfs pursue Their ends by means like yours, or better?

When The Guelfs were shown alike, men ranged with men, And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with blood and blaze, Morn broke: once more, Sordello, meet its gaze Proudly—the people's charge against thee fails In every point, while either party quails! These are the busy ones—be silent thou! Two parties take the world up, and allow No third, yet have one principle, subsist By the same method; whose shall enlist With either, ranks with man's inveterate foes. So there is one less quarrel to compose 'Twixt us: the Guelf's, the Ghibellin's to curse— I have done nothing, but both sides do worse Than nothing; nay to me, forgotten, reft Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers, was left The notion of a service—ha? What lured Me here, what mighty aim was I assured Moved Salinguerra? What a Cause remained Intact, distinct from these, and fate ordained, For all the past, that Cause for me?

One pressed

Before them here, a watcher, to suggest
The subject for a ballad: He must know
The tale of the dead worthy, long ago
Consul of Rome—that's long ago for us,
Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus
In the world's corners—but too late, no doubt,
For the brave time he sought to bring about
—Not know Crescentius Nomentanus? Then
He cast about for terms to tell him, when

Sordello disavowed it, how they used Whenever their Superior introduced A novice to the Brotherhood—(for I Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily Appointed too, quoth he, till Innocent Bade me relinquish, to my small content, My wife or my brown sleeves) out some one spoke Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke The edict issued after his demise That blotted memory, and effigies, All out except a floating power, a name Including, tending to produce the same Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least Within that man, though to a vulgar priest And a vile stranger, fit to be a slave Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho, fortune gave The rule there: but Crescentius, haply drest In white, called Roman Consul for a jest, Taking the people at their word, forth stept As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept Us waiting; stept he forth and from his brain Gave Rome out on its ancient place again, Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome kings styled Themselves the citizens of, and, beguiled Thereby, were fain select the lustrous gem Out of a lapfull, spoil their diadem —The Senate's cypher was so hard to scratch! He flashes like a phanal, men too catch The flame, and Rome's accomplished; when returned Otho and John the Consul's step had spurned, And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress Of adverse fortune bent. They crucified Their Consul in the Forum and abide Such slaves at Rome e'er since, that I—(for I Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily Appointed)—I had option to keep wife Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife Lose both. A song of Rome! And Rome, indeed.

Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,
The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,
Looked an established point of light whence rays
Traversed the world; and all the clustered homes
Beside of men were bent on being Romes
In their degree; the question was how each
Should most resemble Rome, clean out of reach
Herself; nor struggled either principle

To change what it aspired possess—Rome, still For Friedrich or Honorius.

Rome's the Cause. The Rome of the old Pandects, our new laws-The Capitol turned Castle Angelo And structures that inordinately glow Corrected by the Theatre forlorn As a black mundane shell, its world late born -Verona, that's beside it. These combined, We typify the scheme to put mankind Once more in full possession of their rights By his sole agency. On me it lights To build up Rome again—me, first and last: For such a Future was endured the Past! And thus in the grey twilight forth he sprung To give his thought consistency among The People's self, and let their truth avail Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk As at the dawn? merely a perished husk Now, that arose a power like to build Up Rome again? The proud conception chilled So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream of thine -A Rome indebted to no Palatine. Drop arch by arch, Sordello! Art possest Of thy wish now—rewarded for thy quest To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons— Are this and this and this the shining ones Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to say Our favoured tenantry pursue their way After a fashion! This companion slips On the smooth causey, t'other blinkard trips At his mooned sandal. Leave to lead the brawls Here i' the atria? No, friend. He that sprawls On aught but a stibadium suffers . . . goose, Puttest our lustral vase to such an use? Oh, huddle up the day's disasters—march Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch. Rome!

Yet before they quite disband—a whim— Study a shelter, now, for him, and him, Nay, even him, to house them! any cave Suffices—throw out earth. A loophole? Brave! They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou, alas, And I am dead! But here's our son excels At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes That dream into a door-post, just escapes The mystery of hinges. Lie we both Perdue another age. The goodly growth Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt was rough, But that descendant's garb suits well enough A portico-contriver. Speed the years— What's time to us? and lo, a city rears

Itself! nay, enter-what's the grave to us? So, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus The head! successively sewer, forum, cirque-Last age that aqueduct was counted work, And now they tire the artificer upon Blank alabaster, black obsidion, -Careful Jove's face be duly fulgurant, And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples pant Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed What difference betwixt Above the baths. This Rome and ours? Resemblance what between The scurvy dumb-show and the pageant sheen— These Romans and our rabble? Rest thy wit And listen: step by step,—a workman fit With each, nor too fit,—to one's task, one's time,— No leaping o'er the petty to the prime, When just the substituting osier lithe For bulrushes, and after, wood for withe To further loam and roughcast work a stage, Exacts an architect, exacts an age,— Nor tables of the Mauritanian tree For men whose maple log's their luxury,— And Rome's accomplished! Better (say you) merge At once all workmen in the demiurge, All epochs in a life-time, and all tasks In one: undoubtedly the city basks I' the day—while those you'd feast there want the knack Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from speck and brack, Distinguish not your peacock from your swan, Or Mareotic juice from Cœcuban, Nay sneer . . . enough! 'twas happy to conceive Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave Us of that credit: for the rest, her spite Is an old story—serves us very right For adding yet another to the dull List of devices—things proved beautiful Could they be done, Sordello cannot do. He sate upon the terrace, plucked and threw The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch, and drift Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe, Mounds of all majesty. Thou archetype, Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart! And then a low voice wound into his heart: Sordello (lower than a Pythoness Conceding to a Lydian King's distress The cause of his long error—one mistake

Of her past oracle) Sordello, wake !

Where is the vanity? Why count you, one The first step with the last step? What is gone Except that aëry magnificence— That last step you took first? an evidence You were . . . no matter. Let those glances fall! This basis, this beginning step of all, Which proves you one of us, is this gone too? Pity to disconcert one versed as you In fate's ill-nature, but its full extent Eludes Sordello, even: the veil's rent. Read the black writing—that collective man Outstrips the individual! Who began The greatnesses you know?—ay, your own art Shall serve us: put the poet's mimes apart— Close with the poet—closer—what? a dim Too plain form separates itself from him? Alcama's song enmeshes the lulled Isle, Woven into the echoes left erewhile Of Nina's, one soft web of song: no more Turning his name, flower-like o'er and o'er! An elder poet in the younger's place— Take Nina's strength—but lose Alcama's grace? Each neutralizes each then! gaze your fill; Search further and the past presents you still New Ninas, new Alcamas, time's midnight Concluding,—better say its evenlight Of yesterday. You now, in this respect Of benefiting people (to reject The favour of your fearful ignorance A thousand phantasms eager to advance, Refer you but to those within your reach) Were you the first who got, to use plain speech, The Multitude to be materialized? That loose eternal unrest—who devised An apparition i' the midst? the rout Who checked, the breathless ring who formed about That sudden flower? Get round at any risk The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk O' the hly! Swords across it! Reign thy reign And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne! --- The very child of over-joyousness, Unfeeling thence, strong therefore: Strength by stress Of Strength comes of a forehead confident, Two widened eyes expecting heart's content, A calm as out of just-quelled noise, nor swerves The ample cheek for doubt, in gracious curves Abutting on the upthrust nether lip— He wills, how should he doubt then? Ages slip-

Was it Sordello pried into the work So far accomplished, and discovering lurk A company amid the other clans, Only distinct in priests for castellans And popes for Suzerains (their rule confessed Its rule, their interest its interest, Living for sake of living—there an end, Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend In making adversaries or allies); Dived he into its capabilities And dared create out of that sect a soul Should turn the multitude, already whole, To some account? Speak plainer! Is't so sure God's church lives by a King's investiture? Look to last step: a staggering—a shock— What's sand shall be demolished, but the rock Endures—a column of black fiery dust Blots heaven—woe, woe, 'tis prematurely thrust Aside, that step !—the air clears—nought's erased Of the true outline? Thus much is firm based— The other was a scaffold: see you stand Buttressed upon his mattock Hildebrand Of the huge brain-mask welded ply o'er ply As in a forge; it buries either eye White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth clenched, The neck's tight-corded, too, the chin deep-trenched, As if a cloud enveloped him while fought Under it all, grim prizers, thought with thought At dead-lock, agonizing he, until The victor thought leap radiant up, and Will, The slave with folded arms and drooping lids They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it bids. —A root, the crippled mandrake of the earth, Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its birth, Be certain; fruit of suffering's excess, Whence feeling, therefore stronger: still by stress Of Strength, work Knowledge! Full three hundred years For men to wear away in smiles and tears Between the two that nearly seem to touch, Observe you: quit one workman and we clutch Another, letting both their trains go by— The actors-out of either's policy, Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross, May carry the Imperial crowns across, Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's Gold-As Alexander, Innocent uphold On that the Papal keys—but, link on link, Why is it neither chain betrays a chink?

How coalesce the small and great? Alack, For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back! The couple there alone help Gregory: Hark—from the hermit Peter's thin sad cry At Claremont, yonder to the serf that says Friedrich's no liege of his while he delays Getting the Pope's curse off him! The Crusade— Or trick of breeding strength by other aid Than strength, is safe: hark—from the wild harangue Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang Yonder! The League—or trick of turning strength Against pernicious strength, is safe at length: Yet hark—from Mantuan Albert's making cease The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching peace Yonder! God's Truce—or trick to supersede The use of strength at all, is safe. Indeed We trench upon the future! Who shall found Next step, next age—trail plenteous o'er the ground Vine-like, produced by joy and sorrow, whence Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest thence: Knowledge by stress of Knowledge is it? No-E'en were Sordello ready to forego His work for this, 'twere overleaping work Some one must do before, howe'er it irk: No end's in sight yet of that second road: Who means to help must still support the load Hildebrand lifted—why hast Thou, he groaned, Imposed, my God, a thing thy Paul had moaned, And Moses failed beneath, on me? and yet That grandest of the tasks God ever set On man left much to do: a mighty wrench— The scaffold falls—but half the pillars blench Merely, start back again—perchance have been Taken for buttresses: crash every screen, Hammer the tenons better, and engage A gang about your work, for the next age Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part By Knowledge! then—ay, then perchance may start Sordello on his race—but who'll divulge Time's secrets? lo, a step's awry, a bulge To be corrected by a step we thought Got over long ago—till that is wrought, No progress! and that scaffold in its turn Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to spurn. Meanwhile, your some half-dozen years of life Longer, dispose you to forego the strife— Who takes exception? 'Tis Ferrara, mind, Before us, and Goito's left behind:

As you then were, as half yourself, desist! —The warrior-part of you may, an it list, Finding real faulthions difficult to poise, Fling them afar and taste the cream of joys By wielding one in fancy,—what is bard Of you, may spurn the vehicle that marred. Elvs so much, and in mere fancy glut His sense on her free beauties—we have but To please ourselves for law, and you could please What then appeared yourself by dreaming these Rather than doing these: now, fancy's trade Is ended, mind, nor one half may evade The other half: our friends are half of you: Out of a thousand helps, just one or two Can be accomplished presently—but flinch From these (as from the faulchion raised an inch, Elys described a couplet) and make proof Of fancy,—and while one half lolls aloof O' the grass, completing Rome to the tip-top-See if, for that, the other half will stop A tear, begin a smile: that rabble's woes, Ludicrous in their patience as they chose To sit about their town and quietly Be slaughtered,—the poor reckless soldiery, With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how Polt-foot, sang they, was in a pitfall now, Cheering each other from the engine-mounts,— That crippled sprawling idiot who recounts How, lopt of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone, Till the pains crept from out him one by one, And wriggles round the archers on his head To earn a morsel of their chesnut bread,---And Cino, always in the self-same place Weeping; beside that other wretch's case Eyepits to ear one gangrene since he plied The engine in his coat of raw sheep's hide A double watch in the noon sun; and see Lucchino, beauty, with the favours free, Trim hacqueton, and sprucely scented air, Campaigning it for the first time—cut there In two already, boy enough to crawl For latter orpine round the Southern wall, Toma, where Richard's kept, because that whore Marfisa the fool never saw before Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege: Then Tiso's wife—men liked their pretty liege, Cared for her least of whims once, Berta, wed A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor Tiso's dead,

Delivering herself of his first child
On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled
To fifty gazers. (Here a wind below
Made moody music augural of woe
From the pine barrier)—What if, now the scene
Draws to a shutting, if yourself have been
—Yoa, plucking purples in Goito's moss
Like edges of a trabea (not to cross
Your consul-feeling) or dry aloe-shafts
Here at Ferrara—He whom fortune wafts,
This very age her best inheritance
Of opportunities? Yet we advance
Upon the last! Since talking is your trade,
There's Salinguerra left you to persuade,
And then—

No-no-which latest chance secure! Leapt up and cried Sordello: this made sure. The Past is yet redeemable whose work Was—help the Guelfs, and I, howe'er it irk, Thus help! He shook the foolish aloe-haulm Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded calm To the appointed presence. The large head Turned on its socket; And your spokesman, said The large voice, is Elcorte's happy sprout? Few such—(so finishing a speech no doubt Addressed to Palma, silent at his side) Our sober councils have diversified: Elcorte's son! but forward as you may, Our lady's minstrel with so much to say! The hesitating sunset floated back, Rosily traversed in a single track The chamber, from the lattice o'er the girth Of pines to the huge eagle blacked in earth Opposite, outlined sudden, spur to crest, That solid Salinguerra, and caressed Palma's contour; 'twas Day looped back Night's pall; Sordello had a chance left spite of all.

And much he made of the convincing speech He meant should compensate the Past and reach Through his youth's daybreak of unprofit, quite To his noon's labour, so proceed till night At leisure! The contrivances to bind Taurello body with the Cause and mind,—Was the consummate rhetoric just that? Yet most Sordello's argument dropped flat Through his accustomed fault of breaking yoke, Disjoining him who felt from him who spoke: Was 't not a touching incident—so prompt

A rendering the world its just accompt Once proved its debtor? Who'd suppose before This proof that he, Goito's God of yore, At duty's instance could demean himself So memorably, dwindle to a Guelf? Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped, His inmost self at the out-portion peeped Thus occupied; then stole a glance at those Appealed to, curious if her colour rose Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged The need of Lombardy's becoming purged At soonest of her barons; the poor part Abandoned thus missing the blood at heart, Spirit in brain, unseasonably off Elsewhere! But, though his speech was worthy scoff, Good-humoured Salinguerra, famed for tact That way, who, careless of his phrase, ne'er lacked The right phrase, and harangued Honorius dumb At his accession, looked as all fell plumb To purpose and himself took interest In every point his new instructor pressed —Left playing with the rescript's white wax seal To scrutinize Sordello head and heel: Then means he . . yes assent sure? Well? alas, He said no more than, So it comes to pass That poesy, sooner than politics, Makes fade young hair: to think such speech could fix Taurello!

Then a flash; he knew the truth: So fantasies shall break and fritter youth That he has long ago lost earnestness, Lost will to work, lost power to express Even the need of working! Ere the grave No more occasions now, though he should crave One such, in right of superhuman toil To do what was undone, repair his spoil, Alter the Past—nought brings again the chance! Not that he was to die: he saw askance Protract the ignominious years beyond To dream in—time to hope and time despond, Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice As saved a trouble, suited to his choice, One way or other—idle life out, drop No few smooth verses by the way—for prop A thyrsus these sad people should, the same, Pick up, set store by, and, so far from blame, Plant o'er his hearse convinced his better part Survived him. Rather tear men out the heart

Of the truth! Sordello muttered, and renewed His propositions for the Multitude. But Salinguerra who, the last attack, Threw himself in his ruffling corslet back To hear the better, smilingly resumed Some task; beneath the carroch's warning boomed; He must decide with Tito; courteously He turned then, even seeming to agree With his admonisher—Assist the Pope, Extend his domination, fill the scope O' the Church based on All, by All, for All— Change Secular to Evangelical— Echoing his very sentence: all seemed lost, When sudden he looked, laughingly almost, To Palma: This opinion of your friend's For instance, would it answer Palma's ends? Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our Strength (Here he drew out his baldric to its length) To the Pope's Knowledge—let our King Richard slip, Wide to the walls throw ope your gates, equip Azzo with . . . but no matter! Who'll subscribe To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe Henceforward? or pronounce, as Heinrich used, "Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for the joust!" —When Constance, for his couplets, would promote Alcama, from a parti-coloured coat To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars. Not that I see where couplet-making jars With common sense: at Mantua we had borne This chanted, easier than their most forlorn Of bull-fights,—that's indisputable!

Brave! Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall save! All's at an end: a Troubadour suppose Mankind's to class him with their friends or foes? A puny uncouth ailing vassal think The world and him in some especial link? Abrupt the visionary tether's burst— What's to reward or what to be amerced If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream Deservingly, gets tangled by his theme So far as to conceit his knack or gift Or whatsoe'er it be of verse might lift The globe, a lever like the hand and head Of—Men of Action, as the Jongleurs said, —The Great Men, in the people's dialect? And not a moment did this scorn affect Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once,

Asking "what was," obtained a full response. Bid Naddo think at Mantua, he had but To look into his promptuary, put His hand on a set thought in a set speech: And was Sordello fitted thus for each Conjuncture? No wise; since within his soul Perception brooded unexpressed and whole. A healthy spirit like a healthy frame · Craves aliment in plenty and, the same, Changes, assimilates its aliment: Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent? Next day no formularies more you saw Than figs or olives in a sated maw —'Tis Knowldege, whither such perceptions tend, They lose themselves in that, means to an end, The Many Old producing some One New, A Last unlike the First. If lies are true. The Caliph Haroun's man of brass receives A meal, ay, millet grains and lettuce leaves Together in his stomach rattle loose— You find them perfect next day to produce But ne'er expect the man, on strength of that, Can roll an iron camel-collar flat Like Haroun's self! I tell you, what was stored Parcel by parcel through his life, outpoured That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing: And round those three the People formed a ring, Suspended their own vengeance, chose await The issue of this strife to reinstate Them in the right of taking it—in fact He must be proved their lord ere they exact Amends for that lord's defalcation. Last, A reason why the phrases flowed so fast Was in his quite forgetting for the time Himself in his amazement that his rhyme Disguised the royalty so much: he there— They full face to him—and yet unaware Who was the King and who . . . But if I lay On thine my spirit and compel obey His Lord—Taurello? Impotent to build Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled In what such builder should have been as brook One shame beyond the charge that he forsook His function! Set me free that shame I bend A brow before, suppose new years to spend, Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly, recur-Measure thee with the Minstrel, then, demur At any crown he claims! That I must cede

As 'tis my right to my especial meed--Confess you fitter help the world than I Ordained its champion from eternity, Is much: but to behold you scorn the post I quit in your behalf—as aught's to boast Unless you help the world! And while he rung The changes on this theme, the roof up-sprung, The sad walls of the presence-chamber died Into the distance, or embowering yied With far-away Goito's vine-frontier; And crowds of faces (only keeping clear The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground To fight their battle from) deep clustered round Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath, Kind prayers for him no vapour, since, come death, Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every joint. Each bone new-marrowed as whom Gods anoint Though mortal to their rescue: now let sprawl The snaky volumes hither, Typhon's all For Hercules to trample—good report From Salinguerra's only to extort? So was I (closed he his inculcating A poet must be earth's essential king) So was I, royal so, and if I fail 'Tis not the royalty ye witness quail But one deposed who, caring not exert Its proper essence, trifled malapert With accidents instead—good things assigned The herald of a better thing behind— And, worthy through display of these, put forth Never the inmost all-surpassing worth That constitutes him King precisely since As yet no other creature may evince Its like: the power he took most pride to test, Whereby all forms of life had been professed At pleasure, forms already on the earth, Was but a means to power whose novel birth Should, in its novelty, be kingship's proof— Now, whether he came near or kept aloof, Those forms unalterable first to last Proved him her copy, not the protoplast Of Nature: what would come of being free By action to exhibit tree for tree, Bird, beast for beast and bird, or prove earth bore A veritable man or woman more? Means to an end, such proofs; and what the end? Your essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend— Never contract! Already you include

The multitude; now let the multitude Include yourself, and the result is new; Themselves before, the multitude turn you, This were to live and move and have (in them) Your being, and secure a diadem That's to transmit (because no cycle yearns Beyond itself, but on itself returns) When the full sphere in wane, the world o'erlaid Long since with you, shall have in turn obeyed Some orb still prouder, some displayer, still More potent than the last, of human Will, And some new King depose the old. Of such Am I—whom pride of this elates too much? Safe, rather say, mid troops of peers again; I, with my words, hailed brother of the train Once deeds sufficed: for, let the world roll back, Who fails, through deeds diverse soe'er, re-track My purpose still, my task? A teeming crust— Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict—see! Needs must Emerge some Calm embodied these refer (Saturn—no! yellow-bearded Jupiter?) The brawl to; some existence like a pact And protest against chaos, some first fact I' the faint of Time . . my deep of life, I know. Is unavailing e'en to poorly show (For here the Chief immeasurably yawned) Deeds in their due gradation till Song dawned— The fullest effluence of the finest mind All in degree, no way diverse in kind From those about us, minds which, more or less, Lofty or low, in moving seek impress Themselves on somewhat; but one mind has climbed Step after step, by just ascent sublimed: Thought is the soul of act, and stage by stage. Is soul from body still to disengage As tending to a freedom which rejects Such help and incorporeally affects The world, producing deeds but not by deeds, Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds, Assigning them the simpler tasks it used As patiently perform till Song produced Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind: divest Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's unexpressed Will dawns above us. But so much to win Ere that. A lesser round of steps within The last. About me, faces! and they flock, The carnest faces. What shall I unlock By song? behold me prompt, whate'er it be.

To minister: how much can mortals see Of Life? No more? I covet the first task And marshal you Life's elemental Masque Show Men, on evil or on good lay stress, This light, this shade make prominent, suppress All ordinary hues that softening blend Such natures with the level: apprehend Which evil is, which good, if I allot Your Hell, the Purgatory, Heaven ye wot, To those you doubt concerning: I enwomb Some wretched Friedrich with his red-hot tomb. Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph With the black chastening river I engulph; Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine With languors of the planet of decline— These fail to recognise, to arbitrate Between henceforth, to rightly estimate Thus marshalled in the Masque! Myself, the while, As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile At my own showing! Next age—what's to do? The men and women stationed hitherto Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct Each nature to its farthest or obstruct At soonest in the world: Light, thwarted, breaks A limpid purity to rainbow flakes, Or Shadow, helped, freezes to gloom: behold How such, with fit assistance to unfold, Or obstacles to crush them, disengage Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace make, war wage, In presence of you all! Myself implied Superior now, as, by the platform's side, Bidding them do and suffer to content The world . . . no—that I wait not—circumvent A few it has contented, and to these Offer unveil the last of mysteries I boast! Man's life shall have yet freer play: Once more I cast external things away And Natures, varied now, so decompose That . . . but enough! Why fancy how I rose, Or rather you advanced since evermore Yourselves effect what I was fain before Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest, What I leave bare yourselves can now invest? How we attained to talk as brothers talk, In half-words, call things by half-names, no balk From discontinuing old aids—To-day Takes in account the work of Yesterday-Has not the world a Past now, its adept

Consults ere he dispense with or accept New aids? a single touch more may enhance, A touch less turn to insignificance Those structures' symmetry the Past has strewed The world with, once so bare: leave the mere rude Explicit details, 'tis but brother's speech We need, speech where an accent's change gives each The other's soul—no speech to understand By former audience—need was then expand, Expatiate—hardly were they brothers! true— Nor I lament my less remove from you, Nor reconstruct what stands already: ends Accomplished turn to means: my art intends New structure from the ancient: as they changed The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged The horned and snouted Libyan god, upright As in his desert, by some simple bright Clay cinerary pitcher—Thebes as Rome, Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome From Earth's reputed consummations razed A seal the all-transmuting Triad blazed Above. Ah, whose that fortune? ne'ertheless E'en he must stoop contented to express No tithe of what's to say—the vehicle Never sufficient—but his work is still For faces like the faces that select The single service I am bound effect Nor murmur, bid me, still as poet, bow Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow The Kaiser's coming—which with heart, soul, strength, I labour for, this eve, who feel at length My past career's outrageous vanity And would (as vain amends) die, even die Now I first estimate the boon of life, So death might bow Taurello—sure this strife Is the last strife—the People my support. My poor Sordello! what may we extort By this, I wonder? Palma's lighted eyes Turned to Taurello who, long past surprise, Began, You love him-what you'd say at large If I say briefly? First, your father's charge To me, his friend, peruse: I guessed indeed You were no stranger to the course decreed Us both: I leave his children to the saints: As for a certain project, he acquaints The Pope with that, and offers him the best Of your possessions to permit the rest Go peaceably—to Ecelin, a strive

Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe, —To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan Clatches already; extricate who can Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo Cartiglione, Loria-all go, And with them go my hopes! 'Tis lost, then! This eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost Procuring; thirty years—as good I'd spent Like our admonisher! But each his bent Pursues—no question, one might live absurd Oneself this while, by deed as he by word, Persisting to obtrude an influence where 'Tis made account of much as . . . nay, you fare With twice the fortune, youngster—I submit, Happy to parallel my waste of wit With the renowned Sordello's—you decide A course for me—Romano may abide Romano, -- Bacchus! Who'd suppose the dearth Of Ecclins and Alberics on earth? Say there's a prize in prospect, must disgrace Betide competitors? An obscure place Suits me—there wants youth, bustle, one to stalk And attitudinize—some fight, more talk, Most flaunting badges—'twere not hard make clear Since Friedrich's very purposes lie here -Here-pity they are like to lie! For me. Whose station's fixed unceremoniously Long since, small use contesting; I am but The liegeman, you are born the lieges—shut That gentle mouth now !--or resume your kin In your sweet self; Palma were Ecelin For me and welcome! Could that neck endure This bauble for a cumbrous garniture You should . . . or might one bear it for you? Stay-I have not been so flattered many a day As by your pale friend—Bacchus! The least help Would lick the hind's fawn a lion's whelp— His neck is broad enough—a ready tongue Beside—too writ! !od—but, the main thing, young— I could . . . why look ye!

And the badge was thrown Across Sordello's neck: this badge alone Makes you Romano's Head—the Lombard's curb Turns on your neck which would, on mine, disturb My pauldron, said Taurello. A mad act, Nor dreamed about a moment since—in fact Not when his sportive arm rose for the nonce—But he had dallied overmuch, this once,

With power: the thing was done, and he, aware The thing was done, proceeded to declare (So like a nature made to serve, excel In serving, only feel by service well)
That he should make him all he said and more: As good a scheme as any: what's to pore At in my face? he asked—ponder instead a This piece of news; you are Romano's Head—You cannot slacken pace so near the goal, Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole
This time! For you there's Palma to espouse—For me, one crowning trouble ere I house
Like my compeer.

On which ensued a strange And solemn visitation—mighty change O'er every one of them—each looked on each— Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech, And when the giddiness sank and the haze Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze, Sordello with the baldric on, his sire Silent though his proportions seemed aspire Momently; and, interpreting the thrill Night at its ebb, Palma you found was still Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed A year ago, while dying on her breast, Of a contrivance that Vicenza night, Her Ecelin had birth: their convoy's flight Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame That wallowed like a dragon at his game The toppling city through—San Biagio rocks! And wounded lies in her delicious locks Retrude, the frail mother, on her face, None of her wasted, just in one embrace Covering her child: when, as they lifted her, Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier And mightiest Taurello's cry outbroke, Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the smoke. Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward—drown His colleague's clamour, Ecelin's up, down The disarray: failed Adelaide see then Who was the natural Chief, the Man of Men? Outstripping time her Ecelin burst swathe, Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the scathe From wandering after his heritage Lost once and lost for aye—what could engage That deprecating glance? A new Shape leant On a familiar Shape—gloatingly bent O'er his discomfiture; 'mid wreaths it wore,

Still one outflamed the rest-her child's before 'Twas Salinguerra's for his child: scorn, hate Rage startled her from Ecclin—too late! A moment's work, and rival's foot had spurned Never that brow to earth! Ere sense returned-The act conceived, adventured, and complete, They stole away towards an obscure retreat Mother and child—Retrude's self not slain (Nor even here Taurello moved) though pain Was fled; and what assured them most 'twas fled, All pain, was, if you raised the pale hushed head 'Twould turn this way and that, waver awhile. And only settle into its old smile (Graceful as the disquieted water-flag Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag On either side their path) when suffered look Downward: they marched: no sign of life once shook The company's close litter of crossed spears Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears Slipt in the sunset from her long black lash, And she was gone. So far the action rash— No crime. They laid Retrude in the font Taurello's very gift, her child was wont To sit beneath—constant as eve he came To sit by its attendant girls the same As one of them. For Palma, she would blend With this magific spirit to the end That ruled her first—but scarcely had she dared To disobey the Adelaide who scared Her into vowing never to disclose A secret to her husband which so froze His blood at half recital she contrived To hide from him Taurello's infant lived Lest, by revealing that, himself should mar Romano's fortunes: and, a crime so far, Palma received that action: she was told Of Salinguerra's nature, and his cold Calm acquiescence in his lot! Impart the secret to Romano, she Engaged to repossess Sordello of His heritage, and hers, and that way doff The mask, but after years, long years !--while now Was not Romano's sign mark on that brow? Across Taurello's heart his arms, were locked:

Across Taureno's neart his arms, were locked And 'twas when speak he did, as if he mocked The minstrel, who had not to move, he said, Nor stir—should Fate defraud him of a shred Of this son's infancy? much less his youth

(Laughingly all this) which to aid, in truth, Himself, reserved on purpose, had not grown Old, not too old—'twas better keep alone Till now, and never idly met till now:
—Then, in the same breath, told Sordello how The intimations of this eve's event Were futile—Friedrich means advance to Trent, Thence to Vorona, then to Rome—there stop—Tumble the Church down, institute a-top The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy:
—That's now—no prophesying what may be Anon, beneath a monarch of the clime, Native of Gesi, passing his youth's prime At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide On whom . . .

Embrace him, madman! Palma cried Who through the laugh saw sweatdrops burst apace And his lips' blanching: he did not embrace Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.

Understand. This while Sordello was becoming flushed Out of his whiteness; thoughts rushed, fancies rushed. He pressed his hand upon his head and signed Both should forbear him. Nay, the best's behind! Taurello laughed—not quite with the same laugh: The truth is, thus you scatter, ay, like chaff The Guelfs a despicable monk recoils From—nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils Our triumph!—Friedrich? Think you I intend Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I spend And brain I waste? Think you the people clap Their hands at my out-hewing this wild gap For any Friedrich to fill up? 'Tis mine-That's yours: I tell you towards some such design Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes, And for another, yes—but worked no less With instinct at my heart; I else had swerved, While now—look round! My cunning has preserved Samminiato—that's a central place Secures us Florence, boy, in Pisa's case By land as she by sea; with Pisa ours, And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours The land at leisure! Gloriously dispersed— Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first That flanked us (ah, you know not!) in the March; On these we pile, as keystone of our arch, Romagna and Bologna, whose first span

Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan; Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano's sure . . . So he proceeded. Half of all this pure Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true, But what was undone he felt sure to do As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away The pauldron-rings to give his sword-arm play-Need of the sword now! That would soon adjust Aught wrong at present; to the sword intrust Sordello's whiteness, undersize; 'twas plain He hardly rendered right to his own brain— Like a brave hound men educate to pride Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside, As though he could not, gift by gift, match men! Palma had listened patiently: but when 'Twas time expostulate, attempt withdraw Taurello from his child, she, without awe Took off his iron arms from, one by one, Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done, Made him avert his visage and relieve Sordello (you might see his corslet heave The while) who, loose, rose—tried to speak, then sank: They left him in the chamber—all was blank.

And even reeling down the castle-stair Taurello kept up, as though unaware Palma was guide to him, the old device -Something of Milan-how we muster thrice The Torriani's strength there—all along Our own Visconti cowed them—thus the song Continued even while she bade him stoop, Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-loop, The turnings to the gallery below, Where he stopped short as Palma let him go. When he had sate in silence long enough Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff She stopt the truncheon; only to commence One of Sordello's poems, a pretence For speaking, some poor rhyme of Elys' hair And head that's sharp and perfect like a pear, So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks Sun-blanched the livelong Summer—from his worst Performance, the Goito, as his first: And that at end, conceiving from the brow And open mouth no silence would serve now, Went on to say the whole world loved that man And, for that matter, thought his face, tho' wan, Eclipsed the Count's—he sucking in each phrase

As if an angel spoke: the foolish praise Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made Her face a framework with his hands, a shade, A crown, an aureole—there must she remain (Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch) To get the best look at, in fittest niche Dispose his saint; that done, he kissed her brow— Lauded her father for his treason now, He told her, only how could one suspect The wit in him? whose clansman, recollect, Was ever Salinguerra—she, the same, Romano and his lady—so might claim To know all, as she should—and thus begun Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on schemes, not one Fit to be told that foolish boy, he said, But only let Sordello Palma wed, -Then!

'Twas a dim long narrow place at best: Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West As shows its corpse the world's end some split tomb— A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom . Faced Palma—but at length Taurello set Her free; the grating held one ragged jet Of fierce gold fire: he lifted her within The hollow underneath—how else begin Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew The ages than with Palma plain in view? Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head erect, Pursuing his discourse; a grand unchecked Monotony made out from his quick talk And the recurring noises of his walk; —Somewhat too much like the o'ercharged assent Of two resolved friends in one danger blent, Who hearten each the other against heart— Boasting there's nought to care for, when, apart The boaster, all's to care for: he, beside Some shape not visible, in power and pride Approached, out of the dark, ginglingly near, Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-fraught, Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught, And on he strode into the opposite dark Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark I' the stone, and whirl of some loose embossed thong That crashed against the angle age so long After the last, punctual to an amount Of mailed great paces you could not but count,

Prepared you for the pacing back again: And by the snatches might you ascertain That, Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted, left By this alone in Italy, they cleft Asunder, crushed together, at command Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand, Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne— But garnished, Strength with Knowledge, if we deign Accept that compromise and stoop to give Rome law, the Cæsars' Representative. —Enough that the illimitable flood Of triumphs after triumphs, understood In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed Him till, these long since quiet in their graves, He found 'twas looked for that a long life's braves Should somehow be made good—so, weak and worn, Must stagger up at Milan, one grey morn Of the To-Come, to fight his latest fight. But, Salinguerra's prophecy at height-He voluble with a raised arm and stiff, A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if He had our very Italy to keep Or cast away, or gather in a heap To garrison the better—ay, his word Was, "run the cucumber into a gourd, Drive Trent upon Apulia "—at their pitch Who spied the continents and islands which Grew sickles, mulberry leaflets in the map— (Strange that three such confessions so should hap To Palma Dante spoke with in the clear Amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere. Cunizza, as he called her! Never ask Of Palma more! She sate, knowing her task Was done, the labour of it-for success Concerned not Palma, passion's votaress) Triumph at height, I say, Sordello crowned— Above the passage suddenly a sound Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks Taurello, bids With large involuntary asking lids Palma interpret. 'Tis his own foot-stamp-Your hand! His summons! Nay, this idle damp Befits not! Out they two reeled dizzily: "Visconti's strong at Milan," resumed he In the old somewhat insignificant way (Was Palma wont years afterward to say) As though the spirit's flight sustained thus far Dropped at that very instant. Gone they are—

Palma, Taurello; Eglamor anon, Ecelin, Alberic . . . ah, Naddo's gone! -Labours this moonrise what the Master meant " Is Squarcialupo speckled?—purulent I'd say, but when was Providence put out? He carries somehow handily about His spite nor fouls himself!" Goito's vines Stand like a cheat detected—stark rough lines The moon breaks through, a grey mean scale against The vault where, this eve's Maiden, thou remain'st Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed—who can tell? As Heaven, now all's at end, did not so well Spite of the faith and victory, to leave Its virgin quite to death in the lone eve: While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha! wait No longer—these in compass, forward fate!

BOOK THE SIXTH.

THE thought of Eglamor's least like a thought, And yet a false one, was, Man shrinks to nought If matched with symbols of immensity— Must quail, for sooth, before a quiet sky Or sea, too little for their quietude: And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood Confirmed its speciousness while evening sank Down the near terrace to the further bank, And only one spot left out of the night Glimmered upon the river opposite— A breadth of watery heaven like a bay, A sky-like space of water, ray for ray And star for star, one richness where they mixed As this and that wing of an angel, fixed, Tumultuary splendors folded in To die: nor turned he till Ferrara's din (Say, the monotonous speech from a man's lip Who lets some first and eager purpose slip In a new fancy's birth; the speech keeps on Though elsewhere its informing soul be gone) Aroused him, surely offered succour; fate Paused with this eve; ere she precipitate Herself . . . put off strange after-thoughts awhile, That voice, those large hands, that portentous smile. What help to pierce the Future as the Past Lay in the plaining city?

And at last
The main discovery and prime concern,
All that just now imported him to learn,
His truth, like yonder slow moon to complete
Heaven, rose again, and naked at his feet
Lighted his old life's every shift and change,
Effort with counter-effort; nor the range
Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked
Some other—which of these could he suspect
Prying into them by the sudden blaze?
The real way seemed made up of all the ways—

Mood after mood of the one mind in him: Tokens of the existence, bright or dim, Of a transcendent all-embracing sense Demanding only outward influence, A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul, Power to uplift his power, such moon's control, Over the sea-depths, and their mass had swept Onward from the beginning and still kept Its course; but years and years the sky above Held none, and so, untasked of any love, His sensitiveness idled, now amort. Alive now, and to sullenness or sport Given wholly up, disposed itself anew At every passing instigation, grew And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers spilt, Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race Of whitest ripples o'er the reef—found place For myriad charms; not gathered up and, hurled Right from its heart, encompassing the world. So had Sordello been, by consequence, Without a function: others made pretence To strengths not half his own, yet had some core Within, submitted to some moon, before It still, superior still whate'er its force, Were able therefore to fulfil a course Nor missed Life's crown, authentic attribute— To each who lives must be a certain fruit Of having lived in his degree, a stage Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage, To stop at; and to which those spirits tend Who, still discovering beauty without end, Amass the scintillations for one star -Something unlike them, self-sustained, afar, And meanwhile nurse the dream of being blest By winning it to notice and invest Their souls with alien glory some one day Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape alway, Round to the perfect circle—soon or late According as themselves are formed to wait: Whether 'tis human beauty will suffice —The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes. Or human intellect seem best, or each Combine in some ideal form past reach On earth, or else some shade of these, some aim. Some love, hate even, take their place the same That may be served-all this they do not lose, Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose

What Hell shall be—a progress thus pursued Through all existence, still above the food That's offered them, still towering beyond The widened range in virtue of their bond Of sovereignty: not that a Palma's Love A Salinguerra's Hate would equal prove To swaying all Sordello: wherefore doubt, Love meet for such a Strength, some Moon's without To match his Sea?—fear, Good so manifest, Only the Best breaks faith?—but that the Best Somehow eludes us ever, still might be And is not: crave you gems? where's penury Of their material round us? pliant earth, The plastic flame—what balks the Mage his birth —Jacynth in balls, or lodestone by the block? Flinders enrich the strand and veins the rock-No more ! Ask creatures? Life in tempest, Thought Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day woods are fraught With fervors . . . ah, these forms are well enough— But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff Profuse at Nature's pleasure, Men beyond These Men! and thus, perchance, are over-fond In arguing, from Good the Best, from force Divided—force combined, an ocean's course From this our sea whose mere intestine pants Had seemed at times sufficient to our wants. -External Power? If none be adequate And he have been ordained (a prouder fate) A law to his own sphere? the need remove All incompleteness, be that law, that love? Nay, really such be others' laws, though veiled In mercy to each vision that had failed If unassisted by its Want, for lure, Embodied? stronger vision could endure The simple want—no bauble for a truth! The People were himself; and by the ruth At their condition was he less impelled To alter the discrepancy beheld Than if, from the sound Whole, a sickly Part Subtracted were transformed, decked out with art. Then palmed on him as alien wee—the Guelf To succour, proud that he forsook himself? All's himself--all service, therefore, rates Alike, nor serving one part, immolates The rest: but all in time! That lance of yours Makes havoc soon with Malek and his Moors, That buckler's lined with many a Giant's beard Ere long, Porphyrio, be the lance but reared,

The buckler wielded handsomely as now; But view your escort, bear in mind your vow, Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere that, And, if you hope we struggle through this flat, Put lance and buckler up—next half-month lacks A sturdy exercise of mace or axe To cleave this dismal brake of prickly-pear Bristling holds Cydippe by the hair, Lames barefoot Agathon.

Oh, People, urge Your claims !—for thus he ventured to the verge Push a vain mummery which perchance distrust Of his fast slipping resolution thrust No less: accordingly the Crowd—as yet He had inconsciously contrived forget To dwell upon the points . . . one might assuage The signal horrors sooner than engage With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief Not to be fancied off, obtain relief In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk, But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work To correspond—however, forth they stood: And now content thy stronger vision, brood On thy bare want; the grave stript turf by turf, Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-worms' scurf!

Down sank the People's Then; uprose their Now. These sad ones render service to! And how Piteously little must that service prove —Had surely proved in any case! for move Each other obstacle away, let youth Had been aware it had surprised a Truth 'Twere service to impart—can Truth be seized, Settled forthwith, and of the captive eased Its captor look around, since this alit So happily, no gesture luring it, The earnest of a flock to follow? Most vain! a life's to spend ere this he chain. To the poor crowd's complacence; ere the crowd Pronounce it captured he descries a cloud Its kin of twice the plumage—he, in turn, If he shall live as many lives, may learn Secure—not otherwise. Then Mantua called Back to his mind how certain bards were thralled —Buds blasted, but of breaths more like perfumes Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion blooms Could boast—some rose that burnt out heart in sweets, A spendthrift in the Spring, no Summer greetsSome Dularete, drunk with truths and wine,
Grown bestial dreaming how become divine.
Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence
With the commencement, merits crowning! Hence
Must Truth be casual Truth, clicited
In sparks so mean, at intervals dispread
So rarely, that 'tis like at no one time
Of the world's story has not Truth, the prime
Of Truth, the very Truth which, loosed had hurled
Its course aright, been really in the world
Content the while with some mean spark by dint
Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint
Of buried fire, which, rip its breast, would stream
Sky-ward!

Sordello's miserable gleam Was looked for at the moment: he would dash This badge to earth and all it brought, abash Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest The Kaiser from his purpose; would attest His constancy in any case. Before He dashes it, however, think once more! For, was that little truly service? I' the end, no doubt; but meantime? Plain you spy Its ultimate Effect, but many flaws Of vision blur each intervening Cause; Were the day's fraction clear as the life's sum Of service, Now as filled as the To-come With evidence of good—nor too minute A share to vie with evil! How dispute The Guelfs were fitliest maintain in rule? That made the life's work: not so easy school Your day's work—say, on natures circumstanced So variously, which yet, as each advanced Or might impede that Guelf rule, it behoved You, for the Then's sake, hate what Now you loved, Love what you hated; nor if one man bore Brand upon temples while his fellow wore The aureole, would it task us to decide— But portioned duly out, the Future vied Never with the unparcelled Present! Or spare so much on warrant all so slight? The Present's complete sympathies to break, Aversions bear with, for a Future's sake So feeble? Tito ruined through one speck, The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck? This were work, true—but work performed at cost Of other work—aught gained here, elsewhere lost—

For a new segment spoil an orb half-done--Rise with the People one step, and sink . . . one? Would it were one step-less than the whole face-Of things our novel duty bids crase! Harms are to vanquish; what? the Prophet saith, The Minstrel singeth vainly then? Old faith, Old courage, born of the surrounding harms, Were not, from highest to the lowest, charms? Oh, flame persists, but is not glare as staunch? Where the salt marshes stagnate, crystals branch— Blood dries to crimson—Evil's beautified In every shape! But Beauty thrust aside You banish Evil: wherefore? After all Is Evil our result less natural Than Good? For overlook the Seasons' strife With tree and flower—the hideous animal life, Of which who seeks shall find a grinning taunt For his solution, must endure the vaunt Of Nature's angel, as a child that knows Himself befooled, unable to propose Aught better than the fooling—and but care For Men, the varied People then and there, Of which 'tis easy saying Good and Ill Claim him alike! Whence rose the claim but still From Ill, the fruit of Ill—what else could knit Him theirs but Sorrow? Any free from it Were also free from him! A happiness Could be distinguished in this morning's press Of miseries—the fool's who passed a gibe On thee, said he, so wedded to his tribe He carries green and yellow tokens in His very face that he's a Ghibellin— Much hold on him that fool obtained! Nay mount Yet higher; and upon Men's own account Must Evil stay: for what is Joy? To heave Up one obstruction more, and common leave What was peculiar—by this act destroy Itself; a partial death is every joy; The sensible escape, enfranchisement Of a sphere's essence: once the vexed—content, The cramped—at large, the growing circle—round, All's to begin again—some novel bound To break, some new enlargement's to entreat, The sphere though larger is not more complete. Now for Mankind's experience: who alone Might style the unobstructed world his own? Whom palled Goito with its perfect things? Sordello's self; whereas for Mankind springs

Salvation—hindrances are interposed For them, not all Life's view at once disclosed To creatures sudden on its summit left With Heaven above and—yet of wings bereft But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot Where, range on range, the girdling forests shoot Between the prospect and the throngs who scale Earnestly ever, piercing veil by veil, Confirmed with each discovery; in their soul The Whole they seek by Parts—but, found that Whole, Could they revert? Oh, testify! The space Of time we judge so meagre to embrace The Parts, were more than plenty, once attained The Whole, to quite exhaust it: for nought's gained But leave to look—not leave to do: Beneath Soon sates the looker—look Above, then! Tempts ere a tithe of Life be tasted. First, and die soon enough, Sordello! Give Body and spirit the bare right they claim To pasture thee on a voluntuous shame That thou, a pageant-city's denizen, Are neither vilely lodged midst Lombard men— Canst force joy out of sorrow, seem to truck Thine attributes away for sordid muck, Yet manage from that very muck educe Gold; then subject, nor scruple, to thy cruce The world's discardings; think, if ingots pay Such pains, the clods that yielded them are clay To all save thee, and clay remain though quenched Thy purging-fire; who's robbed then? Would I wrenched An ample treasure forth !—As 'tis, why crave A share that ruins me and will not save Yourselves?—imperiously command I quit The course that makes my joy nor will remit Your woe? Would all arrive at joy? The order (time instructs you) nor coerce Each unit till, some predetermined mode, The total be emancipate; our road Is one, our times of travel many; thwart No enterprising soul's precocious start Before the general march; if slow or fast All straggle up to the same point at last, Why grudge my having gained a month ago The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels in blow, While you were landlocked? Speed your Then, but how This badge would suffer you improve my Now! His time of action for, against, or with

Our world (I labour to extract the pith

Of this and more) grew up, that even-tide, Gigantic with its power of joy beside The world's eternity of impotence To profit though at his whole joy's expense. Make nothing of that time because so brief? Rather make more—instead of joy take grief Before its novelty have time subside; No time for the late savour—leave untried Virtue, the creaming honey wine, quick squeeze Vice like a biting spirit from the lees Of life—together let wrath, hatred, lust, All tyrannics in every shape be thrust Upon this Now, which time may reason out As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt-But long ere then Sordello will have slipt Away—you teach him at Goito's crypt There's a blank issue to that fiery thrill! Stirring, the Few cope with the Many, still: So much of dust as, quiet, makes a mass Unable to produce three tufts of grass, Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render void The whole calm glebe's endeavour: be employed! And e'en though somewhat smarts the Crowd for this, Contributes each his pang to make up bliss, 'Tis but one pang--one blood-drop to the bowl Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp uncowl So quick, stains ruddily the dull red cape, And, kindling orbs dull as the unripe grape Before, avails forthwith to dis entrance The mischief—soon to lead a mystic dance Among you! Nay, who sits alone in Rome? Have those great hands indeed hewn out a home For me—compelled to live? Oh, Life, life-breath, Life-blood,—ere sleep be travail, life ere death! This life to feed my soul, direct, oblique, But always feeding! Hindrances? They pique— Helps? such . . . but wherefore say my soul o'ertops All height—than every depth profounder drops? Enough that I can live, and would live! Wait For some transcendent life reserved by Fate To follow this? Oh, never! Fate I trust The same my soul to; for, as who flings dust Perchance—so facile was the deed, she chequed The void with these materials to affect That soul diversely—these consigned anew To nought by death, what marvel if she threw A second and superber spectacle Before it? What may serve for sun—what still

Wander a moon above me—what else wind About me like the pleasures left behind? 'And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh Cling to me? what's new laughter—soothes the fresh Sleep like sleep? Fate's exhaustless for my sake In brave resource, but whether bids she slake My thirst at this first rivulet or count No draught worth lip save from the rocky fount Above i' the clouds, while here she's provident Of (taste) loquacious pearl the soft tree-tent Guards, with its face of reate and sedge, nor fail The silver globules and gold-sparkling grail At bottom—Oh, 'twere too absurd to slight For the hereafter the to-day's delight! Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-spring—wear Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair! Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest heart Offer to serve, contented for my part To give this life up once for all, but grant I really serve; if otherwise, why want Aught further of me? Life they cannot chuse But set aside—wherefore should I refuse The gift? I take it—I, for one, engage Never to falter through the pilgrimage— Or end it howling that the stock or stone Were enviable, truly: I, for one, Will praise the world you style mere antercom To the true palace—but shall I assume -My foot the courtly gait, my tongue the trope My eye the glance, before the doors fly ope One moment? What—with guarders row on row. Gay swarms of varletry that come and go, Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace The plackets of, pert claimants help displace, Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for; laugh At you sleek parasite, break his own staff 'Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's shoulder; why— Admitted to the presence by and bye, Should thought of these recurring make me grieve Among new sights I reach, old sights I leave? Cool citrinc-crystals, fierce pyropus-stone-Bare floor-work too !—But did I let alone That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule Once and for ever?—Floor-work? No such fool! Rather, were Heaven to forestall Earth I'd sav Must I be blessed or you? Then my own way Bless me-a firmer arm, a fleeter foot. I'll thank you, but to no mad wings transmute

These limbs of mine—our greensward is too soft:
Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft—
We feel the bliss distinctlier having thus
Engines subservient, not mixed up with us—
Better move palpably through Heaven—nor, freed
Of flesh forsooth, from space to space proceed
'Mid flying synods of worlds—but in Heaven's marge
Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his targe
Solid with stars—the Centaur at his game
Made tremulously out in hoary flame!

Life! Yet the very cup whose extreme dull Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed, at full, Aside so oft; the death I fly, revealed So oft a better life this life concealed. And which sage, champion, martyr, thro' each path Have hunted fearlessly—the horrid bath, The crippling-irons and the fiery chair: —"Twas well for them; let me become a ware As they, and I relinquish Life too! Let Life's secret but disclose itself! Forget Vain ordinances, I have one appeal— I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel —So much is Truth to me—What Is then? Since One object viewed diversely may evince Beauty and ugliness—this way attract, That way repel, why gloze upon the fact? Why must a single of the sides be right? What bids choose this and leave its opposite? No abstract Right for me—in youth endued With Right still present, still to be pursued, Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife Each with its proper law and mode of life, Each to be dwelt at ease in: thus to sway Regally with the Kaiser, or obey Implicit with his Serf of fluttering heart, Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start Up in the presence, then go forth and shout That some should pick the unstrung jewels out--Were well!

And, as in moments when the Past Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast Himself quite thro' mere secondary states Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates, Into the mid vague yearnings overlaid By these; as who should pierce hill, plain, grove, glade, And so into the very nucleus probe That first determined there exist a Globe:

And as that's easiest half the globe assolved, So seemed Sordello's closing-truth evolved By his flesh-half's break-up—the sudden swell Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well, Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness, Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less. All qualities, in fine, recorded here, Might be but Modes of Time and this one Sphere, Urgent on these but not of force to bind As Time—Eternity, as Matter—Mind, If Mind, Eternity shall choose assert Their attributes within a Life: thus gir. With circumstance, next change beholds them cinct Quite otherwise—with Good and Ill distinct, Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result-Contrived to render easy, difficult, This or the other course of . . . what new bond In place of flesh may stop their flight beyond Its new sphere, as that course does harm or good To its arrangements. Once this understood. As suddenly he felt himself alone, Quite out of Time and this World all was known. What made the secret of the past despair? (Most imminent when he seemed most aware Of greatness in the Past—nought turned him mad Like craving to expand the power he had, Not a new power to be expanded)—just This made it; Soul on Matter being thrust, 'Tis Joy when so much Soul is wreaked in Time On Matter,—let the Soul attempt sublime Matter beyond its scheme and so prevent Or more or less that deed's accomplishment, And Sorrow follows: Sorrow to avoid— Let the Employer match the thing Employed, Fit to the finite his infinity, And thus proceed for ever, in degree Changed but in kind the same, still limited To the appointed circumstance and dead To all beyond: a sphere is but a sphere— Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy here-Since to the spirit's absoluteness all Are like: now of the present sphere we call Life, are conditions—take but this among Many; the Body was to be so long Youthful, no longer—but, since no control Tied to that Body's purposes his Soul, It chose to understand the Body's trade More than the Body's self—had fain conveyed

Its boundless, to the body's bounded lot— So, the soul permanent, the body not,— Scarcely the one minute for enjoying here. The soul must needs instruct its weak compeer, Run o'er its capabilities and wring A joy thence it holds worth experiencing-Which, far from half discovered even,—lo, The minute gone, the body's power's let go Apportioned to that joy's acquirement! Broke, Say, morning o'er the earth and all it woke— From the volcano's vapour-flag to hoist Black o'er the spread of sea, to the low moist Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with rain, Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again-(The Small a sphere as perfect as the Great To the soul's absoluteness)—meditate On such an Autumn-morning's cluster-chord And the whole music it was framed afford, And, the chord's might discovered, what should pluck One string, the finger, was found palsy-struck. And then what marvel if the Spirit, shown A saddest sight—the Body lost alone Thro' its officious proffered help, deprived Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived, Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip hence,— Vaingloriously were fain, for recompense, To stem the ruin even yet, protract The Body's term, supply the power it lacked From its infinity, compel it learn These qualities were only Time's concern, That Body may, with its assistance, barred— Advance the same, vanquished—obtain reward, Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow, Of Wrong made Right and turn Ill Good below— And the result is, the poor Body soon Sinks under what was meant a wondrous boon, Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast. So much was plain then, proper in the Past;

So much was plain then, proper in the Past;
To be complete for, satisfy the whole
Series of spheres—Eternity, his soul
Exceeded, so was incomplete for, each
One sphere—our Time. But does our knowledge reach
No farther? Is the cloud of hindrance broke
But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,
Its loves and hates, as now when they let soar
The spirit, self-sufficient as before,
Tho' but the single space that shall elapse
'Twixt its enthralment in new bonds perhaps?

Must Life be ever but escaped, which should Have been enjoyed? nay, might have been and would, Once ordered rightly, and a Soul's no whit More than the Body's purpose under it (A breadth of watery heaven like a bay, A sky-like space of water, ray for ray And star for star, one richness where they mixed As this and that wing of an angel, fixed, Tumultuary splendours folded in To die) and which thus, far from first begin Exciting discontent, but surest quelled The Body if aspiring it rebelled. But how so order Life? Still brutalize The soul, the sad world's method—muffled eves To all that was before, shall after be This sphere—and every other quality Save some sole and immutable Great and Good And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its hood To follow? Never may some soul see All -The Great before and after and the Small Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore, And take the single course prescribed before, As the king-bird with ages on his plumes Travels to die in his ancestral glooms? But where descry the Love that shall select That course? Here is a Soul whom to affect Nature has plied with all her means—from trees And flowers—e'en to the Multitude . . . and these Decides he save or no? One word to end!

Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend And speak for you. A Power above him still Which, utterly incomprehensible, Is out of rivalry, which thus he can Love, tho' unloving all conceived by Man—What need! And of—none the minutest duct To that out-Nature, nought that would instruct And so let rivalry begin to live—But of a Power its representative Who, being for authority the same, Communication different, should claim A course the first chose and this last revealed—This Human clear, as that Divine concealed—The utter need!

What has Sordello found? Or can his spirit go the mighty round At length, end where our souls begun? as says Old fable, the two doves were sent two ways

About the world—where in the midst they met Tho' on a shifting waste of sand, men set Jove's temple? Quick, what has Sordello found? For they approach—approach—that foot's rebound. Palma? No, Salinguerra tho' in mail; They mount, have reached the threshold, dash the veil Aside—and you divine who sat there dead ' Under his foot the badge; still, Palma said, A triumph lingering in the wide eyes Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies Help from above in his extreme despair, And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there With short quick passionate cry; as Palma prest In one great kiss her lips upon his breast It beat. By this the hermit-bee has stopped His day's toil at Goito—the new-cropped Dead vine-leaf answers, now 'tis eve, he bit, Twirled so, and filed all day—the mansion's fit— God counselled for; as easy guess the word That passed betwixt them and become the third To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax Him with one fault—so no remembrance racks Of the stone maidens and the font of stone He, creeping thro' the crevice, leaves alone-Alas, my friend—Alas Sordello! whom Anon we laid within that cold font-tomb— And yet again alas!

And now is't worth Our while bring back to mind, much less set forth How Salinguerra extricates himself Without Sordello? Ghibellin and Guelf May fight their fiercest? If Count Richard sulked In durance, or the Marquis paid his mulct, Who cares, Sordello gone? The upshot, sure, Was peace; our chief made some frank overture That prospered; compliment fell thick and fast On its disposer, and Taurello passed With foe and friend for an outstripping soul Nine days at least: then, fairly reached the goal, He, by one effort, blotted the great hope Out of his mind, no further tried to cope With Este that mad evening's style, but sent Away the Legate and the League, content No blame at least the brothers had incurred. —Despatched a message to the Monk he heard Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at, Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin mat

And ne'er spoke more,—informed the Ferrarese He but retained their rule so long as these Lingered in pupilage—and last, no mode Apparent else of keeping safe the road From Germany direct to Lombardy For Friedrich, none, that is, to guarantee The faith and promptitude of who should next Obtain Sofia's dowry, sore perplexed— (Sofia being youngest of the tribe Of daughters Ecelin was wont to bribe The envious magnates with—nor since he sent Enrico Egna this fair child had Trent Once failed the Kaiser's purposes—we lost Egna last year, and who takes Egna's post— Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich knock?) Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock In pure necessity, and so destroyed His slender last of chances, quite made void Old prophecy, and spite of all the schemes Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's dreams, Was sucked into Romano: and so hushed He up this evening's work, that when, 'twas brushed Somehow against by a blind chronicle Which, chronicling whatever woe befell Ferrara, scented this the obscure woe And "Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his Sire," The townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could but admire Which of Sofia's five he meant. The chaps Of his dead hope were tardy to collapse, Obliterated not the beautiful Distinctive features at a crash—scarce dull Next year, as Azzo, Boniface withdrew Each to his stronghold; then (securely too Ecelin at Campese slept—close by Who likes may see him in Solagna lie With cushioned head and gloved hand to denote The Cavalier he was)—then his heart smote Young Ecelin conceive! Long since adult, And, save Vicenza's business, what result In blood and blaze? so hard 'twas intercept Sordello till Sordello's option. Its lord on Lombardy—for in the nick Of time when he at last and Alberic Closed with Taurello, came precisely news That in Verona half the souls refuse Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count— Have cast them from a throne they bid him mount,

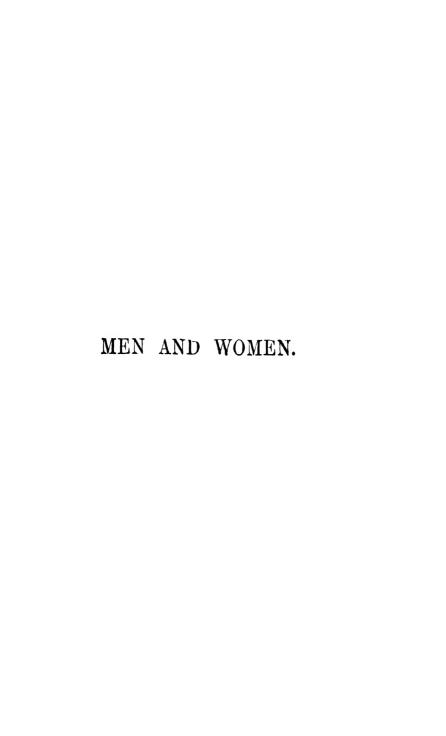
'Ineir Podestà, thro' his ancestral worth: Ecclin flew there, and the town henceforth Was wholly his-Taurello sinking back From temporary station to a track That suited: news received of this acquist, Friedrich did come to Lombardy—who missed Taurello? Yet another year—they took Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook For refuge, and, when hundreds two or three After conspired to call themselves "the Free," Opposing Alberic, these Bassanese. (Without Sordello!)—Ecclin at ease Slaughtered them so observably that oft A little Salinguerra looked with soft Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper age To get appointed his proud uncle's page: More years passed, and that sire was dwindled down To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown Better through age, his parts still in repute, Subtle-how else?-but hardly so astute As his contemperaneous friends professed— Undoubtedly a brawler—for the rest, Known by each neighbour, so allowed for, let Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret Men who had missed their boyhood's bugbear-trap The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap A battered pinion—was the word. In fine, One flap too much and Venice's marine . Was meddled with; no overlooking that! We captured him in his Ferrara, fat And florid at a banquet, more by fraud Than force, to speak the truth—there's slender laud Ascribed you for assisting eighty years To pull his death on such a man-fate shears The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine threads You fritter: so, presiding his board-head, A great smile your assurance all went well With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell!) In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends, Made some pretence at fighting, just amends For the shame done his eighty years—apart The principle, none found it in his heart To be much angry with Taurello—gained Our galleys with the prize, and what remained But carry him to Venice for a show? -Set him, as 'twere, down gently-free to go His gait, inspect our square, pretend observe The swallows soaring their eternal curve

'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens Gathered importunately, fives and tens, To point their children the Magnifico, All but a monarch once in firm-land, go His gait among them now—it took, indeed, Fully this Ecclin to supersede That man, remarked the seniors. Singular Sordello's inability to bar Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly brought About by his strange disbelief that aught Was to be done, should fairly thrust the Twain Under Taurello's tutelage, that, brain And heart and hand, be forthwith in one rod Indissolubly bound to baffle God Who loves the world—should thus allow the thin Grey wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin. And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic (Mere man, alas) to put his problem quick To demonstration—prove wherever's will To do, there's plenty to be done, or ill Or good: anointed, then, to rend and rip-Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and whip, They plagued the world: a touch of Hildebrand (So far from obsolete!) made Lombards band Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause, And saving Milan win the world's applause. Ecelin perished: and I think grass grew Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù By San Zenon where Alberic in turn Saw his exasperated captors burn Seven children with their mother, and, regaled So far, tied on to a wild horse, was trailed To death through raunce and bramble-bush: I take God's part and testify that mid the brake Wild o'er his castle on Zenone's knoll You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll— Chirrups the contumacious grasshopper, Rustles the lizards and the cushats chirre Above the ravage: there, at deep of day A week since, heard I the old Canon say He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst And Alberic's huge skeleton unhearsed Five years ago, no more: he added, June's A month for carding off our first cocoons The silkworms fabricate—a double news, Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. Choose. And Naddo gone, all's gone; not Eglamor! Believe I knew the face I waited for.

A guest my spirit of the golden courts: Oh strange to see how, despite ill-reports, Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained Its joyous look of love! Suns waxed and waned, And still my spirit held an upward flight, Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light More and more gorgeous—ever that face there The last admitted! crossed, too, with some care As perfect triumph were not sure for all, But on a few enduring damp must fall, A transient struggle, haply a painful sense Of the inferior nature's clinging—whence Slight starting tears easily wiped away, Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play Of irrepressible admiration—not Aspiring, all considered, to their lot Who ever, just as they prepare ascend Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend Thy frank delight at their exclusive track. That upturned fervid face and hair put back! Is there no more to say? He of the rhymes— Many a tale of this retreat betimes Was born: Sordello die at once for men? The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen Relating how a Prince Visconti saved Mantua and elsewhere notably behaved-Who thus by fortune's ordering events Passed with posterity to all intents For just the God he never could become: As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never dumb In praise of him: while what he should have been, Could be, and was not—the one step too mean For him to take, we suffer at this day Because of; Ecelin had pushed away Its chance ere Dante could arrive to take That step Sordello spurned, for the world's sake: He did much—but Sordello's step was gone. Thus had Sordello ta'en that step alone. Apollo had been compassed—'twas a fit He wished should go to him, not he to it -As one content to merely be supposed Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed Really at home—one who was chiefly glad To have achieved the few real deeds he had Because that way assured they were not worth Doing, so spared from doing them henceforth— A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes

Never itself, itself—had he embraced

Their cause then, Men had plucked Hesperian fruit And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot All he was anxious to appear but scarce Solicitous to be: a sorry farce Such life is after all—cannot I say He lived for some one better thing? this way-Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill, Morning just up, higher and higher runs A child barefoot and rosy—See! the sun's On the square castle's inner-court's green wall —Like the chine of some fossil animal Half turned to earth and flowers; and thro' the haze (Save where some slender patches of grey maize Are to be overleaped) that boy has crost The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost Matting the balm and mountain camomile: Up and up goes he, singing all the while Some unintelligible words to beat The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet So worsted is he at the few fine locks Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks Sumblanched the livelong summer.—All that's left Of the Goito lay! And thus bereft, Sleep and forget, Sordello . . . in effect He sleeps, the feverish poet—I suspect Not utterly companionless; but, friends, Wake up; the ghost's gone, and the story ends I'd fain hope, sweetly—seeing, peri or ghoul, That spirits are conjectured fair or foul, Evil or good, judicious authors think According as they vanish in a stink Or in a perfume: friends be frank; ye snuff Civet, I warrant: really? Like enough-Merely the savour's rareness—any nose May ravage with impunity a rose — Rifle a musk-pod and 'twill ache like yours: I'd tell you that same pungency ensures An after-gust, but that were overbold: Who would has heard Sordello's story told.



MEN AND WOMEN.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

T.

Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—

II.

Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)

Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since

Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

III.

Now—the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)

IV.

Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be prest,
Twelve abreast.

v.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass Never was!

Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
And embeds

Every vestige of the city, guessed alone, Stock or stone—

VI.

Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe Long ago;

Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame Struck them tame;

And that glory and that shame alike, the gold Bought and sold.

VII.

Now,—the single little turret that remains On the plains,

By the caper overrooted, by the gourd Overscored.

While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks—

VIII.

Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time Sprang sublime,

And a burning ring all round, the chariots traced As they raced,

And the monarch and his minions and his dames Viewed the games.

IX.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve Smiles to leave

To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece In such peace,

And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey Melt away—

x.

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair Waits me there In the turret, whence the charioteers caught soul For the goal,

When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

XI.

But he looked upon the city, every side, Far and wide,

All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades' Colonnades,

All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
All the men!

XII.

When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand, Either hand

On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace Of my face,

Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech Each on each.

XIII.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth South and north,

And they built their gods a brazen pillar high As the sky,

Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—Gold, of course.

XIV.

Oh, heart! oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns! Earth's returns

For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin! Shut them in,

With their triumphs and their glories and the rest.

Love is best?

A LOVER'S QUARREL.

I.

Oн, what a dawn of day!
How the March sun feels like May î
All is blue again
After last night's rain,
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.
Only, my Love's away!
I'd as lief that the blue were grey.

H.

Runnels, which rillets swell,
Must be dancing down the dell
With a foamy head
On the beryl bed
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell;
Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

III.

Dearest, three months ago!

When we lived blocked-up with snow,—

When the wind would edge

In and in his wedge,

In, as far as the point could go—

Not to our ingle, though,

Where we loved each the other so!

Iv.

Laughs with so little cause!

We devised games out of straws.

We would try and trace
One another's face

In the ash, as an artist draws;

Free on each other's flaws,

How we chattered like two church daws!

v.

What's in the "Times?"—a scold
At the emperor deep and cold;
He has taken a bride
To his gruesome side,
That's as fair as himself is bold:
There they sit ermine-stoled,
And she powders her hair with gold.

VI.

Fancy the Pampas' sheen!

Miles and miles of gold and green

Where the sun-flowers blow

In a solid glow,

And to break now and then the screen—

Black neck and eyeballs keen,

Up a wild horse leaps between!

VII.

Try, will our table turn?

Lay your hands there light, and yearn

Till the yearning slips

Thro' the finger tips

In a fire which a few discern,

And a very few feel burn,

And the rest, they may live and learns

VIII.

Then we would up and pace,
For a change, about the place,
Each with arm o'er neck.
'Tis our quarter-deck,
We are seamen in woeful case.
Help in the ocean-space!
Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

IX.

See, how she looks now, drest
In a sledging-cap and vest.

'Tis a huge fur cloak—
Like a reindeer's yoke
Falls the lappet along the breast:
Sleeves for her arms to rest,
Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

x.

Teach me to flirt a fan
As the Spanish ladies can,
Or I tint your lip
With a burnt stick's tip
And you turn into such a man!
Just the two spots that span
Half the bill of the young male swan.

XI.

Dearest, three months ago
When the mesmeriser Snow
With his hand's first sweep
Put the earth to sleep.

'Twas a time when the heart could show
All—how was earth to know,
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro!

XII.

Dearest, three months ago
When we loved each other so,
Lived and loved the same
Till an evening came
When a shaft from the Devil's bow
Pierced to our ingle-glow,
And the friends were friend and foe i

XIII.

Not from the heart beneath—
"Twas a bubble born of breath,
Neither sneer nor vaunt,
Nor reproach nor taunt.
See a word, how it severeth!
Oh, power of life and death
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

XIV.

Woman, and will you cast
For a word, quite off at last,
Me, your own, your you,—
Since, as Truth is true,
I was you all the happy past—
Me do you leave aghast
With the memories we amassed?

xv.

Love, if you knew the light
That your soul casts in my sight,
How I look to you
For the pure and true,
And the beauteous and the right,
Bear with a moment's spite
When a mere mote threats the white?

XVI

What of a hasty word?

Is the fleshly heart not stirred

By a worm's pin-prick

Where its roots are quick?

See the eye, by a fly's-foot blurred—

Ear, when a straw is heard

Scratch the brain's coat of curd!

XVII.

Foul be the world or fair,

More or less, how can I care?

'Tis the world the same
For my praise or blame,

And endurance is easy there.

Wrong in the one thing rare—
Oh, it is hard to bear!

XVIII.

Here's the spring back or close,
When the almond-blossom blows;
We shall have the word
In that minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows—
Heaps of the guelder-rose!
I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX.

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
At the warning slash
Of his driver's-lash—
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum!

XX.

Then, were the world well stript
Of the gear wherein equipped
We can stand apart,
Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped,
Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt!

XXI.

Each in the crypt would cry
"But one freezes here! and why?

When a heart as chill
At my own would thrill
Back to life, and its fires out-fly?

Heart, shall we live or die?
The rest, . . . settle it by and by!"

XXII.

So, she'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before.

Just at twelve o'clock
I shall hear her knock
In the worst of a storm's uproar—
I shall pull her through the door—
I shall have her for evermore!

EVELYN HOPE.

ı.

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass.
Little has yet been changed, I think—
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

II.

Sixteen years old when she died!
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name—
It was not her time to love: beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir—
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III.

It is too late then, Evelyn Hope?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
And just because I was thrice as old,
And our paths in the world diverged so wide
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

IV.

No, indeed! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love,—
I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few—
Much is to learn and much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

٧.

But the time will come,—at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant, I shall say,
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

VI

I have lived, I shall say, so much since then, Given up myself so many times, Gained me the gains of various men, Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes; Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope, Either I missed or itself missed me— And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope! What is the issue? let us see!

VII

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while;
My heart seemed full as it could hold—
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile
And the red young mouth and the hair's young gold.
So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep—
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand.
There, that is our secret! go to sleep;
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY.

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY.)

ı.

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare, The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square. Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

TT.

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least! There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast; While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

III.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain's edge as bare as the creature's skull,
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned
wool.

IV.

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses! Why? They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take the eye!

Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry!

You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by: Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets •high;

And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

v.

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights, 'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the heights:

You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam and wheeze,

And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive trees.

VI.

Is it better in May, I ask you? you've summer all at once; In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns! 'Midthe sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers well, The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell, Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and sell.

VII.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and splash!

In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-bows flash

On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle and pash

Round the lady atop in the conch—fifty gazers do not abash, Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a sort of sash!

VIII.

All the year long at the villa, nothing's to see though you linger, Except you cypress that points like Death's lean lifted fore-finger.

Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix in the corn and mingle,

Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.

Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,

And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs

on the hill.

Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the fever and chill.

TX.

Ere opening your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells begin:

No sooner the bells leave off, than the diligence rattles in:

You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.

By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, let's blood, draws teeth;

Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.

At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play, piping hot!

And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were shot.

Above it, behold the archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,

And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law of the Duke's!

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don Soand-so

Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and Cicero, "And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming,) "the skirts of St. Paul has reached,

Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous than ever he preached."

Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession! our Lady borne smiling and smart

With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords stuck in her heart!

Bang, whang, whang, goes the drum, tootle-te-tootle the fife; No keeping one's haunches still: it's the greatest pleasure in life.

x.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear! fowls, wine, at double the rate.

They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays passing the gate

It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city! Beggars can scarcely be choosers—but still—ah, the pity, the pity!

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls and sandals,

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow candles.

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention of scandals.

Bang, whang, whang, goes the drum, tootle-te-tootle the fife. Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD.

I.

Let's contend no more, Love, Strive nor weep— All be as before, Love, —Only sleep!

II.

What so wild as words are?

—I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough!

III.

See the creature stalking
While we speak--Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on check!

IV.

What so false as truth is,
False to thee?
Where the serpent's tooth is,
Shun the tree—

v.

Where the apple reddens Never pry--Lest we lose our Edens, Eve and I!

VI.

Be a god and hold me With a charm— Be a man and fold me With thine arm! VII.

Teach me, only teach, Love!
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought—

VIII.

Meet, if thou require it, Both demands, Laying flesh and spirit In thy hands!

IX.

That shall be to-morrow Not to-night: I must bury sorrow Out of sight.

X.

Must a little weep, Love,
 Foolish me!
 And so fall asleep, Love,
 Loved by thee.

FRA LIPPO LIPPI.

I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave! You need not clap your torches to my face. Zooks, what's to blame? you think you see a monk! What, it's past midnight, and you go the rounds, And here you catch me at an alley's end Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar. The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up, Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal, Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole, And nip each softling of a wee white mouse, Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company! Aha, you know your betters? Then, you'll take

Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat, And please to know me likewise. Who am I? Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call? Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici, In the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best! Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged, How you affected such a gullet's-gripe! But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves Pick up a manner nor discredit you. Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets And count fair prize what comes into their net? He's Judas to a tittle, that man is! Just such a face! why, sir, you make amends. Lord! I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go Drink out this quarter-florin to the health Of the munificent House that harbours me (And many more beside, lads! more beside!) And all's come square again. I'd like his face— His, elbowing on his comrade in the door With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair With one hand ("look you, now," as who should say) And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped! It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk, A wood-coal or the like? or you should see! Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so. What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down, You know them and they take you? like enough! I saw the proper twinkle in your eye-'Tell you I liked your looks at very first. Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch. Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands To roam the town and sing out carnival, And I've been three weeks shut within my mew, A-painting for the great man, saints and saints And saints again. I could not paint all night— Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air. There came a hurry of feet and little feet, A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whifts of song,— Flower o' the broom, Take away love, and our earth is a tomb! Flower o' the quince, I let Lisa go, and what good's in life since? Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went. Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter, Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight—three slim shapes— And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,

That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went, Curtain and counterpane and coverlet, All the bed furniture—a dozen knots, There was a ladder! down I let myself, Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped, And after them. I came up with the fun Hard by St. Laurence, hail fellow, well met,— Flower o' the rose, If I've been merry, what matter who knows? And so as I was stealing back again To get to bed and have a bit of sleep Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast With his great round stone to subdue the flesh, You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see! Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head-Mine's shaved,—a monk, you say—the sting's in that! If Master Cosimo announced himself, Mum's the word naturally; but a monk! Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now! I was a baby when my mother died And father died and left me in the street. I starved there, God knows how, a year or two On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks, Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day My stomach being empty as your hat, The wind doubled me up and down I went. Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand, (Its fellow was a stinger as I knew) And so along the wall, over the bridge, By the straight cut to the convent. Six words, there, While I stood munching my first bread that month: "So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-time,-"To quit this very miserable world? Will you renounce" . . . The mouthful of bread? thought I By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me; I did renounce the world, its pride and greed, Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house, Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici, Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old. Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure, 'Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful, The warm serge and the rope that goes all round, And day long blessed idleness beside! "Let's see what the urchin's fit for "-that came next. Not overmuch their way, I must confess. Such a to-do! they tried me with their books.

Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste! Flower o' the clove, All the Latin I construe is, "amo" I love! But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets Eight years together, as my fortune was, Watching folk's faces to know who will fling The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires, And who will curse or kick him for his pains— Which gentleman processional and fine, Holding a candle to the Sacrament Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch The droppings of the wax to sell again, Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,— How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop His bone from the heap of offal in the street! -The soul and sense of him grow sharp alike, He learns the look of things, and none the less For admonitions from the hunger-pinch, I had a store of such remarks, be sure, Which, after I found leisure, turned to use: I drew men's faces on my copy-books, Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge, Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes, Found nose and eyes and chin for A.'s and B.'s, And made a string of pictures of the world Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun, On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black. "Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out, d'ye say? In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark. What if at last we get our man of parts, We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine And put the front on it that ought to be!" And hereupon they bade me daub away. Thank you! my head being crammed, their walls a blank, Never was such prompt disemburdening. First, every sort of monk the black and white, I drew them, fat and lean: then folks at church, From good old gossips waiting to confess Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,— To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot, Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there With the little children round him in a row Of admiration, half for his beard and half For that white anger of his victim's son Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm, Signing himself with the other because of Christ (Whose sad face on the cross sees only this

After the passion of a thousand years) Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head Which the intense eyes looked through, came at eve On tip-toe, said a word, dropped in a loaf, Her pair of ear-rings and a bunch of flowers The brute took growling, prayed, and then was gone. I painted all, then cried "'tis ask and have-Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat, And showed my covered bit of cloister- wall. The monks closed in a circle and praised loud Till checked, (taught what to see and not to see, Being simple bodies) "that's the very man! Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog ! That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes To care about his asthma: it's the life!" But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funked— Their betters took their turn to see and say: The Prior and the learned pulled a face And stopped all that in no time. "How? what's here Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all! Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-game! Your business is not to catch men with show, With homage to the perishable clay, But lift them over it, ignore it all, Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh. Your business is to paint the souls of men-Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . no it's not . . It's vapour done up like a new-born babe— (In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth) It's . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul! Give us no more of body than shows soul. Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God! That sets you praising,—why not stop with him? Why put all thoughts of praise out of our heads With wonder at lines, colours, and what not? Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms! Rub all out, try at it a second time. Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts, She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would sav,-Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off-Have it all out! " Now, is this sense, I ask? A fine way to paint soul, by painting body So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white When what you put for yellow's simply black, And any sort of meaning looks intense When all beside itself means and looks nought.

Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn. Left foot and right foot, go a double step, Make his flesh liker and his soul more like. Both in their order? Take the prettiest face. The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty You can't discover if it means hope, fear, Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these? Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue, Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash, And then add soul and heighten them threefold? Or say there's beauty with no soul at all— (I never saw it—put the case the same—) If you get simple beauty and nought else, You get about the best thing God invents,— That's somewhat. And you'll find the soul you have missed, Within yourself when you return Him thanks! "Rub all out!" well, well, there's my life, in short, And so the thing has gone on ever since. I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds— You should not take a fellow eight years old And make him swear to never kiss the girls— I'm my own master, paint now as I please— Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house! Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front— Those great rings serve more purposes than just To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse! And yet the old schooling sticks—the old grave eyes Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work, The heads shake still—"It's Art's decline, my son! You're not of the true painters, great and old: Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find: Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer. Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!" Flower o' the pine, You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine! I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know! Don't you think they're the likeliest to know, They, with their Latin? so I swallow my rage, Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint To please them—sometimes do, and sometimes don't, For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come A turn—some warm eve finds me at my saints— A laugh, a cry, the business of the world— (Flower o' the peach, Death for us all, and his own life for each!) And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs o er. The world and life's too big to pass for a drea. And I do these wild things in sheer despite,

And play the fooleries you catch me at, In pure rage! the old mill-horse, out at grass After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so, Although the miller does not preach to him The only good of grass is to make chaff. What would men have? Do they like grass or no-May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing Settled for ever one way: as it is, You tell too many lies and hurt yourself. You don't like what you only like too much, You do like what, if given you at your word, You find abundantly detestable. For me, I think I speak as I was taught— I always see the Garden and God there A-making man's wife—and, my lesson learned, The value and significance of flesh, I can't unlearn ten minutes afterward. You understand me: I'm a beast, I know. But see, now—why, I see as certainly As that the morning-star's about to shine, What will hap some day. We've a youngster here Comes to our convent, studies what I do, Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop— His name is Guidi—he'll not mind the monks— They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk— He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace, I hope so—though I never live so long, I know what's sure to follow. You be judge! You speak no Latin more than I, belike-However, you're my man, you've seen the world —The beauty and the wonder and the power, The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades, Changes, surprises,—and God made it all! -For what? do you feel thankful, ay or no, For this fair town's face, yonder river's line, The mountain round it and the sky above, Much more the figures of man, woman, child, These are the frame to? What's it all about? To be passed o'er, despised? or dwelt upon, Wondered at? oh, this last of course, you say. But why not do as well as say,—paint these Just as they are, careless what comes of it? God's works—paint anyone, and count it crime To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works Are here already—nature is complete: Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't) There's no advantage! you must beat her, then." For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love

First when we see them painted, things we have passed Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see: And so they are better, painted—better to us, Which is the same thing. Art was given for that— God uses us to help each other so. Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now, Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk, And trust me but you should though! How much more. If I drew higher things with the same truth! That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place, Interpret God to all of you! oh, oh, It makes me mad to see what men shall do And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us. Nor blank—it means intensely, and means good: To find its meaning is my meat and drink. "Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer," Strikes in the Prior! "when your meaning's plain It does not say to folks—remember matins— Or, mind you fast next Friday." Why, for this What need of art at all? A skull and bones, Two bits of stick nailed cross-wise, or, what's best. A bell to chime the hour with, does as well. I painted a St. Laurence six months since At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style. "How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?" I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns-"Already not one phiz of your three slaves That turn the Deacon off his toasted side, But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content, The pious people have so eased their own When coming to say prayers there in a rage. We get on fast to see the bricks beneath. Expect another job this time next year, For pity and religion grow i' the crowd— Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools! —That is—you'll not mistake an idle word Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot, Tasting the air this spicy night which turns The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine! Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now! It's natural a poor monk out of bounds Should have his apt word to excuse himself: And hearken how I plot to make amends. I have bethought me; I shall paint a piece . . . There's for you! Give me six months, then go, see Something in Sant' Ambrogio's . . . (bless the nuns) They want a cast of my office) I shall paint God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,

Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood, Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet As puff on puff of grated orris-root When ladies crowd to church at midsummer. And then in the front, of course a saint or two-Saint John, because he saves the Florentines. Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white The convent's friends and gives them a long day, And Job, I must have him there past mistake, The man of Uz, (and Us without the z, Painters who need his patience.) Well, all these Secured at their devotions, up shall come Out of a corner when you least expect, As one by a dark stair into a great light Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!— Mazed, motionless and moon-struck—I'm the man! Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear? I, caught up with my monk's things by mistake, My old serge gown and rope that goes all round, I, in this presence, this pure company! Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape? Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!" -Addresses the celestial presence, "nay-He made you and devised you, after all, Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there, draw-His camel-hair make up a painting-brush? We come to brother Lippo for all that, Iste perfecit opus!" So, all smile— I shuffle sideways with my blushing face Under the cover of a hundred wings Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut, Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off To some safe bench behind, not letting go The palm of her, the little lily thing That spoke the good word for me in the nick, Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say. And so all's saved for me, and for the church A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence! Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights, no lights! The street's hushed, and I know my own way back-Don't fear me! There's the grey beginning. Zooks!

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S.

T.

Он, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!

I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and blind;

But although I give you credit, 'tis with such a heavy mind!

IT.

Here you come with your old music, and here's all the good it brings.

What, they lived once thus at Venice, where the merchants were the kings.

Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?

III.

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and 'tis arched by . . . what you call

. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept the carnival!

I was never out of England—it's as if I saw it all!

IV.

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm in May?

Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-day, When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you say?

V.

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red,— On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its bed,

O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might base his head?

VI.

Well (and it was graceful of them) they'd break talk off and afford

—She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he to finger on his sword,

While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

VII.

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished sigh on sigh,

Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions—"Must we die?"

Those commiserating sevenths—" Life might last! we can but try!"

VIII.

"Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are you still as happy?"—"Yes—and you?"

—"Then more kisses"—"Did I stop them, when a million seemed so few?"

Hark—the dominant's persistence, till it must be answered to!

IX.

So an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare say!

'Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!

I can always leave off talking, when I hear a master play."

х.

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by one,

Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,

Death came tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.

XI.

But when I sit down to reason,—think to take my stand nor swerve

Till I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve, In you come with your cold music, till I creep thro' every nerve.

XII.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was burned—

"Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice earned!

The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be discerned.

XIII.

"Yours for instance, you know physics, something of geology, Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their degree; Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not die, it cannot be!

XIV.

"As for Venice and its people, merely born to bloom and drop, Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop.

What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

XV.

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.

Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all the gold

Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old.

BY THE FIRE-SIDE.

I.

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark Autumn evenings come,
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too!

II.

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose!

111.

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
"There he is at it, deep in Greek—
Now or never, then, out we slip
To cut from the hazels by the creek
A mainmast for our ship."

IV.

I shall be at it indeed, my friends!
Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth, as soon extends
To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

v.

The outside-frame like your hazel-trees—But the inside-archway narrows fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees.

VI.

I follow wherever I am led, Knowing so well the leader's hand— Oh, woman-country, wooed, not wed, Loved all the more by earth's male-lands, Laid to their hearts instead!

VII.

Look at the ruined chapel again
Half way up in the Alpine gorge.
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
Or is it a mill or an iron forge
Breaks solitude in vain?

VIII.

'A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;
The woods are round us, heaped and dim;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Thro' the ravage some torrent brings!

IX.

Does it feed the little lake below?
That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella: see, in the evening glow
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets Heaven in snow.

\mathbf{x}

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

XI.

Oh, the sense of the yellow mountain flowers, And the thorny balls, each three in one, The chestnuts throw on our path in showers, For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun These early November hours—

XII.

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield, else gold from rim to boss,
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needled mat of moss,

XIII.

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
You sudden coral nipple bulged
Where a freaked, fawn-coloured, flaky crew
Of toad-stools peep indulged.

XIV.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge.

XV.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish grey and mostly wet;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike!

XVI.

Poor little place, where its one priest comes On a festa-day, if he comes at all, To the dozen folk from their scattered homes, Gathered within that precinct small By the dozen ways one roams

XVII.

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

XVIII.

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, art's early wont—
'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt—

XIX

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
Dating—good thought of our architect's—
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

XX.

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times:
The place is silent and aware;
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

XXI.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh, heart my own, oh, eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor?

XXII.

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them; Youth, flowery all the way, there stops— Not they; age threatens and they contemn, Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops, One inch from our life's safe hem!

XXIII.

With me, youth led—I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it
Mutely—my heart knows how—

XXIV.

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;
And you, too, find without a rebuff
The response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff—

XXV.

My own, comfirm me! If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that by its side
Youth seems the waste instead!

XXVI.

My own, see where the years conduct!
At first, 'twas something our two souls
Should mix as mists do: each is sucked
Into each now; on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

XXVII.

Think, when our one soul understands

The great Word which makes all things new—
When earth breaks up and Heaven expands—
How will the change strike me and you
In the House not made with hands?

XXVIII.

Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine, Your heart anticipate my heart, You must be just before, in fine, See and make me see, for your part, New depths of the Divine!

XXIX.

But who could have expected this,
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss?

XXX.

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again—
Let us now forget and then recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall!

XXXI.

What did I say?—that a small bird sings All day long, save when a brown pair Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings Strained to a bell: 'gainst the noon-day glare You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII.

But at afternoon or almost eve
'Tis better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

XXXIII.

Hither we walked, then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied
While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

xxxv.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under—
Look through the window's grated square:
Nothing to see! for fear of plunder,
The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

XXXVI.

We stoop and look in through the grate, See the little porch and rustic door, Read duly the dead builder's date, Then cross the bridge we crossed before, Take the path again—but wait!

XXXVII.

Oh moment, one and infinite!
The water slips o'er stock and stone;
The west is tender, hardly bright.
How grey at once is the evening grown—
One star, the chrysolite!

XXXVIII.

We two stood there with never a third,
But each by each, as each knew well.
The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

XXXIX.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away!
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this!

XL.

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her. I could fix her face with a guard between, And find her soul as when friends confer, Friends—lovers that might have been.

XLI.

For my heart had a touch of the woodland time, Wanting to sleep now over its best.

Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime, But bring to the last leaf no such test.

"Hold the last fast!" says the rhyme.

XLII.

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year can mend!
But a last leaf—fear to touch.

XLIII.

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall Eddying down till it find your face At some slight wind—(best chance of all!) Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place You trembled to forestal!

XLIV.

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,

—That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonise,
And taste a very hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize!

XLV.

Oh, you might have turned and tried a man, Set him a space to weary and wear, And prove which suited more your plan, His best of hope or his worst despair, Yet end as he began.

XLVI.

But you spared me this, like the heart you are, And filled my empty heart at a word. If you join two lives, there is oft a sear, They are one and one, with a shadowy third; One near one is too far.

XLVII.

A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast.
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life; we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

XLVIII.

The forests had done it; there they stood—
We caught for a second the powers at play:
They had mingled us so, for once and for good,
Their work was done—we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

XLIX.

How the world is made for each of us!

How all we perceive and know in it

Tends to some moment's product thus,

When a soul declares itself—to wit,

By its fruit—the thing it does!

L.

Be Hate that fruit or Love that fruit,
It forwards the General Deed of Man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan,
Each living his own, to boot.

LI.

I am named and known by that hour's feat,
There took my station and degree.
So grew my own small life complete
As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet!

LII.

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now Back again, as you mutely sit Musing by fire-light, that great brow And the spirit-small hand propping it Yonder, my heart knows how!

LIII.

So the earth has gained by one man more,
And the gain of earth must be Heaven's gain too,
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
When the autumn comes: which I mean to do
One day, as I said before.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

I.

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou
Who art all truth and who dost love me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say—
Should'st love so truly and could'st love me still
A whole long life through, had but love its will,
Would death that leads me from thee brook delay!

II.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Would never let mine go, thy heart withstand
The beating of my heart to reach its place.
When should I look for thee and feel thee gone?
When cry for the old comfort and find none?
Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

III.

Oh, I should fade—tis willed so! might I save, Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
It is not to be granted. But the soul.
Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole;
Vainly the flesh fades—soul makes all things new.

IV.

And 'twould not be because my eye grew dim
Thou could'st not find the love there, thanks to Him
Who never is dishonoured in the spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang nor be afraid
While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

v.

So, how thou would'st be perfect, white and clean Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne Alike, this body given to show it by! Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss, What plaudits from the next world after this, Could'st thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky!

VI.

And is it not the bitterer to think
That, disengage our hands and thou wilt sink
Although thy love was love in very deed?
I know that nature! Pass a festive day
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

VII.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell; If old things remain old things all is well,
For thou art grateful as becomes man best:
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
With hee would such things fade as with the rest.

VIII.

I seem to see! we meet and part: 'tis brief:
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank;
That is a portrait of me on the wall—
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call;
And for all this, one little hour's to thank.

IX.

But now, because the hour through years was fixed, Because our inmost beings met and mixed, Because thou once hast loved me—wilt thou dare Say to thy soul and Who may list beside, "Therefore she is immortally my bride, Chance cannot change that love, nor time impair.

Y

"So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,
I, a tired traveller, of my sun bereft,
Look from my path when, mimicking the same,
The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone?

Where was it till the sunset? where anon
It will be at the sunrise! what's to blame?"

XI.

Is it so helpful to thee? canst thou take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,
Put gently by such efforts at a beam?
Is the remainder of the way so long
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong?
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream!

XII.

"—Ah, but the fresher faces! Is it true,"
Thou'lt ask, "some eyes are beautiful and new?
Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp such wealth?
And if a man would press his lips to lips
Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips
The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth?

XIII.

"It cannot change the love kept still for Her,
Much more than, such a picture to prefer
Passing a day with, to a room's bare side.
The painted form takes nothing she possessed,
Yet while the Titian's Venus lies at rest
A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide?"

XIV.

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach
Its warrant to the very thefts from me—
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
Thy man's truth I was bold to bid God see!

XV.

Love so, then, if thou wilt! Give all thou canst Away to the new faces—disentranced—
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more,
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint—
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
Image and superscription once they bore!

XVI.

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
Since mine thou wast, mine art, and mine shalt bo,
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee!

XVII.

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
Why need the other women know so much
And talk together, "Such the look and such,
The smile he used to love with, then as now!

XVIII.

Might I die last and shew thee! Should I find Such hardship in the few years left behind,
If free to take and light my lamp, and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
The better that they are so blank, I know!

XIX.

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er Within my mind each look, get more and more By heart each word, too much to learn at first, And join thee all the fitter for the pause 'Neath the low door-way's lintel. That were cause For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst!

XX.

And yet thou art the nobler of us two.

What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,

Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride?

I'll say then, here's a trial and a task—

Is it to bear?—if easy, I'll not ask—

Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

XXI.

Pride?—when those eyes forestal the life behind
The death I have to go through!—when I find,
Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast
Until the little minute's sleep is past
And I wake saved.—And yet, it will not be!

AN EPISTLE.

CONTAINING THE

STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

Karshish, the picker-up of learning's crumbs, The not-incurious in God's handiwork (This man's-flesh He hath admirably made, Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste. To coop up and keep down on earth a space That puff of vapour from His mouth, man's soul) -To Abib, all-sagacious in our art, Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast, Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain, Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip Back and rejoin its source before the term,— And aptest in contrivance, under God, To baffle it by deftly stopping such: The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace) Three samples of true snake-stone—rarer still, One of the other sort, the melon-shaped, (But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs) And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho,
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labour unrepaid?
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone
On many a flinty furlong of this land.
Also the country-side is all on fire
With rumours of a marching hitherward—
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear;
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,

And once a town declared me for a spy. But at the end, I reach Jerusalem, Since this poor covert where I pass the night, This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence A man with plague-sores at the third degree Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here! 'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe, To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip And share with thee whatever Jewry yields. A viscid choler is observable In tertians, I was nearly bold to say, And falling-sickness hath a happier cure Than our school wots of: there's a spider here Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs, Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back; Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind, The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to? His service payeth me a sublimate Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye. Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn. There set in order my experiences, Gather what most deserves and give thee all— Or I might add, Judea's gum-tragacanth Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained, Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry, In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy-Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar-But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully, Protesteth his devotion is my price— Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal? I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush, What set me off a-writing first of all. An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang! For, be it this town's barrenness—or else The Man had something in the look of him-His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth. So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose In the great press of novelty at hand The care and pains this somehow stole from me) I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind, Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth? The very man is gone from me but now, Whose ailment is the subject of discourse. Thus then, and let thy better wit help all.

'Tis but a case of mania—subinduced By epilepsy, at the turning-point Of trance prolonged unduly some three days, When by the exhibition of some drug Or spell, exorcisation, stroke of art Unknown to me and which 'twere well to know, The evil thing out-breaking all at once Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,--But, flinging, so to speak, life's gates too wide, Making a clear house of it too suddenly, The first conceit that entered pleased to write Whatever it was minded on the wall So plainly at that vantage, as it were, (First come, first served) that nothing subsequent Attaineth to erase the fancy-scrawls Which the returned and new-established soul Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart That henceforth she will read or these or none. And first—the man's own firm conviction rests That he was dead (in fact they buried him) That he was dead and then restored to life By a Nazarene physician of his tribe: -'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise. "Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry. Not so this figment !—not, that such a fume, Instead of giving way to time and health, Should eat itself into the life of life, As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all! For see, how he takes up the after-life. The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew, Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age, The body's habit wholly laudable, As much, indeed, beyond the common health As he were made and put aside to shew. Think, could we penetrate by any drug And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh, And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep! Whence has the man the balm that brightens all? This grown man eyes the world now like a child. Some elders of his tribe. I should premise, Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep, To bear my inquisition. While they spoke, Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,— He listened not except I spoke to him, But folded his two hands and let them talk, Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool. And that's a sample how his years must go. Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,

Should find a treasure, can he use the same With straightened habits and with tastes starved small, And take at once to his impoverished brain The sudden element that changes things, -That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand, And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust? Is he not such an one as moves to mirth— Warily parsimonious, when's no need, Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times? All prudent counsel as to what befits The golden mean, is lost on such an one. The man's fantastic will is the man's law. So here—we'll call the treasure knowledge, say— Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—-Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth, Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing Heaven. The man is witless of the size, the sum, The value in proportion of all things, Or whether it be little or be much. Discourse to him of prodigious armaments Assembled to besiege his city now, And of the passing of a mule with gourds -'Tis one! Then take it on the other side, Speak of some trifling fact—he will gaze rapt With stupor at its very littleness— (Far as I see) as if in that indeed He caught prodigious import, whole results; And so will turn to us the bystanders In ever the same stupor (note this point, That we too see not with his opened eyes! Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play, Preposterously, at cross purposes. Should his child sicken unto death, - why, look For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness, Or pretermission of his daily craft -While a word, gesture, glance, from that same child At play or in the school or laid asleep, Will start him to an agony of fear, Exasperation, just as like! demand The reason why—" 'tis but a word," object— "A gesture"—he regards thee as our lord Who lived there in the pyramid alone, Looked at us, dost thou mind, when being young We both would unadvisedly recite Some charm's beginning, from that book of his, Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst All into stars, as suns grown old are wont. Thou and the child have each a veil alike

Thrown o'er your heads from under which ye both Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match Over a mine of Greek fire, did ve know! He holds on firmly to some thread of life— (It is the life to lead perforcedly) Which runs across some vast distracting orb Of glory on either side that meagre thread, Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet — The spiritual life around the earthly life! The law of that is known to him as this— His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here. So is the man perplext with impulses Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on, Proclaiming what is Right and Wrong across— And not along—this black thread through the blaze— "It should be" balked by "here it cannot be." And oft the man's soul springs into his face As if he saw again and heard again His sage that bade him "Rise" and he did rise. Something—a word, a tick of the blood within Admonishes—then back he sinks at once To ashes, that was very fire before, In sedulous recurrence to his trade Whereby he earneth him the daily bread— And studiously the humbler for that pride, Professedly the faultier that he knows God's secret, while he holds the thread of life. Indeed the especial marking of the man Is prone submission to the Heavenly will— Seeing it, what it is, and why it is. 'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last For that same death which will restore his being To equilibrium, body loosening soul Divorced even now by premature full growth: He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live So long as God please, and just how God please. He even seeketh not to please God more (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please. Hence I perceive not he affects to preach The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be— Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do. How can be give his neighbour the real ground, His own conviction? ardent as he is-Call his great truth a lie, why still the old "Be it as God please" reassureth him. I probed the sore as thy disciple should "How, beast," said I, "this stolid carelessness Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march

To stamp out like a little spark thy town, Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?" He merely looked with his large eyes on me. The man is apathetic, you deduce? Contrariwise he loves both old and young, Able and weak—affects the very brutes And birds-how say I? flowers of the field-As a wise workman recognises tools In a master's workshop, loving what they make. Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb: Only impatient, let him do his best, At ignorance and carelessness and sin— An indignation which is promptly curbed. As when in certain travels I have feigned To be an ignoramus in our art According to some preconceived design, And happed to hear the land's practitioners Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance, Prattle fantastically on disease, Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace!

Thou wilt object—why have I not ere this Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene Who wrought this cure, enquiring at the source, Conferring with the frankness that befits? Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech Perished in a tumult many years ago, Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry, Rebellion, to the setting up a rule And creed prodigious as described to me. His death which happened when the earthquake fell (Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss To occult learning in our lord the sage That lived there in the pyramid alone) Was wrought by the mad people—that's their wont— On vain recourse, as I conjecture it, To his tried virtue, for miraculous help-How could he stop the earthquake? That's their way! The other imputations must be lies: But take one—though I loathe to give it thee, In mere respect to any good man's fame! (And after all our patient Lazarus Is stark mad—should we count on what he says? Perhaps not—though in writing to a leech 'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.) This man so cured regards the curer then, As—God forgive me—who but God himself. Creator and Sustainer of the world.

That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile \(\)—'Sayeth that such an One was born and lived,
Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,
And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith—but why all this of what he saith?
Why write of trivial matters, things of price
Calling at every moment for remark?
I noticed on the margin of a pool
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case. Which, now that I review it, needs must seem Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth. Nor I myself discern in what is writ Good cause for the peculiar interest And awe indeed this man has touched me with. Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus— I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills Like an old lion's cheek-teeth. Out there came A moon made like a face with certain spots Multiform, manifold, and menacing: Then a wind rose behind me. So we met In this old sleepy town at unaware, The man and I. I send thee what is writ. Regard it as a chance, a matter risked To this ambiguous Syrian-he may lose, Or steal, or give it thee with equal good. Jerusalem's repose shall make amends For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine, Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think? So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—So, through the thunder comes a human voice Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here! Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself. Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine, But love I gave thee, with Myself to love, And thou must love me who have died for thee!" The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

MESMERISM.

T.

ALL I believed is true!
I am able yet
All I want to get
By a method as strange as new;
Dare I trust the same to you?

II.

If at night, when doors are shut,
And the wood-worm picks,
And the death-watch ticks,
And the bar has a flag of smut,
And a cat's in the water-butt—

III.

And the socket floats and flares,
And the house-beams groan,
And a foot unknown
Is surmised on the garret-stairs,
And the locks slip unawares—

IV.

And the spider, to serve his ends,
By a sudden thread,
Arms and legs outspread,
On the table's midst descends,
Comes to find, God knows what friends!—

v.

If since eve drew in, I say,
I have sate and brought
(So to speak) my though?
To bear on the woman away,
Till I felt my hair turn grey—

VI.

Till I seemed to have and hold
In the vacancy
'Twixt the wall and me,
From the hair-plait's chestnut-gold
To the foot in its muslin fold—

VII.

Have and hold, then and there,
Her, from head to foot,
Breathing and mute,
Passive and yet aware,
In the grasp of my steady stare—

VIII.

Hold and have, there and then,
All her body and soul
That completes my Whole,
All that women add to men.
In the clutch of my steady ken—

IX.

Having and holding, till
I imprint her fast
On the void at last
As the sun does whom he will
By the calotypist's skill—

х.

Then,—if my heart's strength serve.
And through all and each
Of the veils I reach
To her soul and never swerve,
Knitting an iron nerve—

XI.

Commanding that to advance
And inform the shape
Which has made escape
And before my countenance
Answers me glance for glance -

XII.

I, still with a gesture fit
Of my hands that best
Do my soul's behest,
Pointing the power from it,
While myself do steadfast sit—

XIII.

Steadfast and still the same
On my object bent
While the hands give vent
To my ardour and my aim
And break into very flame—

XIV.

Then, I reach, I must believe,
Not her soul in vain,
For to me again
It reaches, and past retrieve
Is wound in the toils I weave-

XV.

And must follow as I require,
As befits a thrall,
Bringing flesh and all,
Essence and earth-attire,
To the source of the tractile fire—

XVI.

Till the house called hers, not mine,
With a growing weight
Seems to suffocate
If she break not its leaden line
And escape from its close confine—

XVII.

Out of doors into the night!
On to the maze
Of the wild wood-ways,
Not turning to left or right
From the pathway, blind with sight—

XVIII.

Making thro' rain and wind
O'er the broken shrubs,
'Twixt the stems and stubs,
With a still composed strong mind,
Not a care for the world behind—

XIX.

Swifter and still more swift,
As the crowding peace
Doth to joy increase
In the wide blind eyes uplift,
Thro' the darkness and the drift!

XX.

While I—to the shape, I too
Feel my soul dilate
Nor a whit abate
And relax not a gesture due
As I see my belief come true—

XXI.

For there! have I drawn or no
Life to that lip?
Do my fingers dip
In a flame which again they throw
On the cheek that breaks a-glow?

XXII.

Ha! was the hair so first?
What, unfilleted,
Made alive, and spread
Through the void with a rich outburst,
Chestnut gold-interspersed!

XXIII.

Like the doors of a casket-shrine, See, on either side, Her two arms divide Till the heart betwixt makes sign, Take me, for I am thine!

XXIV.

Now—now—the door is heard
Hark! the stairs and nearNearer—and here—
Now! and at call the third
She enters without a word.

XXV.

On doth she march and on
To the fancied shape—
It is past escape
Herself, now---the dream is done
And the shadow and she are one.

XXVI.

First I will pray. Do Thou
That ownest the soul
Yet wilt grant controul
To another nor disallow
For a time, restrain me now!

XXVII.

I admonish me while I may,
Not to squander guilt,
Since require Thou wilt
At my hand its price one day:
What the price is, who can say?

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

ī.

That was I, you heard last night
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small:
Life was dead, and so was light.

H.

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm.
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music; that was I.

III.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof:
In at heaven and out again,
Lightning!—where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

IV.

What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one!
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

٧.

So wore night; the east was grey,
White the broad-faced hemlock flowers;
Soon would come another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had past away.

VI.

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you—"When life gropes
Feebly for the path where fell
Light last on the evening slopes.

VII.

"One friend in that path shall be
To secure my steps from wrong;
One to count night day for me,
Patient through the watches long,
Serving most with none to see."

VIII.

Never say—as something bodes—
"So the worst has yet a worse!
When life halts 'neath double loads,
Better the task-master's curse
Than such music on the roads!

IX.

"When no moon succeeds the sun,
Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
Any star, the smallest one,
While some drops, where lightning went,
Show the final storm begun—

x.

"When the fire-fly hides its spot,
When the garden-voices fail
In the darkness thick and hot,—
Shall another voice avail,
That shape be where those are not?

XI.

"Has some plague a longer lease Proffering its help uncouth? Can't one even die in peace? As one shuts one's eyes on youth, Is that face the last one sees?" XII.

Oh, how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood—the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

MY STAR.

ALL that I know

Of a certain star,
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue,
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird,—like a flower, hangs furled;
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

INSTANS TYRANNUS.

ı.

OF the million or two, more or less, I rule and possess,
One man, for some cause undefined,
Was least to my mind.

11.

I struck him, he grovelled of course—
For, what was his force?
I pinned him to earth with my weight
And persistence of hate—
And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
As if lots might be worse.

III.

"Were the object less mean, would he stand At the swing of my hand! For obscurity helps him and blots The hole where he squats." So I set my five wits on the stretch To inveigle the wretch. All in vain! gold and jewels I threw, Still he couched there perdue. I tempted his blood and his flesh, Hid in roses my mesh, Choicest cates and the flagon's best spilth—Still he kept to his filth!

IV.

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, if I press—
Just a son or a mother to seize—
No such booty as these!
Were it simply a friend to pursue
'Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me in person or pelf
What he owes me himself.
No! I could not but smile through my chafe—
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
—Through minuteness, to wit.

у.

Then a humor more great took its place At the thought of his face, The droop, the low cares of the mouth, The trouble uncouth 'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain To put out of its painAnd, no, I admonished myself.

"Is one mocked by an elf,
"Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
The gravamen's in that!
How the lion, who crouches to suit
His back to my foot,
Would admire that I stand in debate!
But the Small is the Great
If it vexes you,—that is the thing!
Toad or rat vex the King?
Though I waste half my realm to unearth
Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!"

VI.

So I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.
Round his creep-hole,—with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake;
Over-head, did my thunders combine
With my under-ground mine:
Till I looked from my labor content
To enjoy the event.

VII.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
Did I say "without friend?"
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe prest!
Do you see? just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his ices,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
—So, I was afraid!

A PRETTY WOMAN.

T.

That fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers, And the blue eye Dear and dewy, And that infantine fresh air of hers!

II.

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
And enfold you,
Ay, and hold you,
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet!

III.

You like us for a glance, you know-For a word's sake, Or a sword's sake, All's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

IV.

And in turn we make you ours, we say—You and youth too,
Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

v.

All's our own, to make the most of, Sweet—Sing and say for,
Watch and pray for
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet.

VI.

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet.

VII.

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there—
Be its beauty
Its sole duty!
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

VIII.

And while the face lies quiet there,
Who shall wonder
That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX.

As,—why must one, for the love forgone,
Scout mero liking?
Thunder-striking
Earth,—the heaven, we locked above for, gone!

x.

Why with beauty, needs there money be— Love with liking? Crush the fly-king In his gauze, because no honey bee?

XI.

May not liking be so simple-sweet,

If love grew there
'Twould undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

XII.

Is the creature too imperfect, say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye!

XIII.

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,

Just perfection—

Whence, rejection

Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

XIV.

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once Into tinder, And so hinder Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

xv.

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
Your love-fancies!—
A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

XVI.

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose,—
Plucks a mould-flower
For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose.

XVII.

Rosy rubics make its cup more rose,
Precious metals
Ape the petals,—
Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

XVIII.

Then, how grace a rose? I know a way!
Leave it rather.
Must you gather?
Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw away!

CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME."

(See Edgar's Song in "LEAR.")

I.

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee that pursed and scored
Its edge at one more victim gained thereby.

II.

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travellers that might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

III.

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed; neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
So much as gladness that some end should be.

IV.

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring,—
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

v.

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears and takes the farewell of each frie
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,
"And the blow fall'n no grieving can amend")

VI.

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves,
And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

VII.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band"—to wit.
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now—should I be fit.

VIII.

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray

IX.

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than pausing to throw backward a last view
To the safe road, 'twas gone! grey plain all round!
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on; nought else remained to do.

x.

So on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve:
For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove!
But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You'd think: a burr had been a treasure-trove.

XI.

No! penury, inertness, and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion.
Or shut your eyes "—said Nature peevishly—
"It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:
The Judgment's fire alone can cure this place,
Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

XII.

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped—the bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves—bruised as to baulk
All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

XIII.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy—thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there—
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

XIV.

Alive? he might be dead for all I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane.
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe:
I never saw a brute I hated so—
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

XV.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.

As a man calls for wine before he fights,

I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights

Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.

Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art:

One taste of the old times sets all to rights!

XVI.

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas! one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

XVII.

Giles, then, the soul of honour—there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest men should dare (he said) he durst.
Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what hangman's hand
Pin to his breast a parchment? his own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst!

XVIII.

Better this present than a past like that—
Back therefore to my darkening path again.
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
I asked: when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

XIX.

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms—
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the find's glowing hoof—to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

XX.

So petty yet so spiteful! all along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

XXI.

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how I feared To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek, Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
—It may have been a water-rat I speared, But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

XXII.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.

Now for a better country. Vain presage!

Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a plash? toads in a poisoned tank,

Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

XXIII.

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.

What kept them there, with all the plain to choose?

No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,

None out of it: mad brewage set to work

Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk

Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

XXIV.

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there! What bad use was that engine for, that wheel, Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to ree! Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware, Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

xxv.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

XXVI.

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
Now patches where some learness of the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII.

And just as far as ever from the end!

Nought in the distance but the evening, nought
To point my footstep further! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I sought.

XXVIII.

For looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
All round to mountains—with such name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stol'n in view.
How thus they had surprised me,—solve it, you!
How to get from them was no plainer case.

XXIX.

Yet half I seemed to recognise some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when—
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den!

XXX.

Burningly it came on me all at once,

This was the place! those two hills on the right
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight—
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,
Fool, to be dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight!

XXXI.

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?

The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

XXXII.

Not see? because of night perhaps?—Why, day
Came back again for that! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay—
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—
"Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!"

XXXIII.

Not hear? when noise was everywhere? it tolled Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears, Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—
How such a one was strong, and such was bold, And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

XXXIV.

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides—met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set
And blew. "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came."

RESPECTABILITY.

ı.

Dear, had the world in its caprice
Deigned to proclaim "I know you both,
Have recognised your plighted troth,
Am sponsor for you—live in peace!"—
How many precious months and years
Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
Before we found it out at last,
The world, and what it fears?

II.

How much of priceless life were spent
With men that every virtue decks,
And women models of their sex,
Society's true ornament,—
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
Thro' wind and rain, and watch the Seine,
And feel the Boulevart break again
To warmth and light and bliss?

III.

I know! the world proscribes not love;
Allows my finger to caress
Your lip's contour and downiness,
Provided it supply a glove.
The world's good word!—the Institute!
Guizot receives Montalembert!
Eh? down the court three lampions flare—Put forward your best foot!

A LIGHT WOMAN.

I.

So far as our story approaches the end,
Which do you pity the most of us three?—
My friend, or the mistress of my friend
With her wanton eyes, or me?

II.

My friend was already too good to lose,
And seemed in the way of improvement yet,
When she crossed his path with her hunting-noose
And over him drew her net.

III.

When I saw him tangled in her toils,
A shame, said I, if she adds just him
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
The hundredth, for a whim!

1V.

And before my friend be wholly hers,
How easy to prove to him, I said,
An eagle's the game her pride prefers,
Though she snaps at the wren instead!

v.

So I gave her eyes my own eyes to take, My hand sought hers as in earnest need, And round she turned for my noble sake, And gave me herself indeed.

VΙ

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,
The wren is he, with his maiden face.
—You look away and your lip is curled?
Patience, a moment's space!

VII.

For see—my friend goes shaking and white; He eyes me as the basilisk: I have turned, it appears, his day to night, Eclipsing his sun's disc.

VIII

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:

"Though I love her—that he comprehends—
One should master one's passions, (love, in chief)
And be loyal to one's friends!'

IX.

And she,—she lies in my hand as tame As a pear hung basking over a wall; Just a touch to try and off it came; 'Tis mine,—can I let it fall?

x.

With no mind to eat it, that's the worst!
Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist?
'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst
When I gave its stalk a twist.

XI.

And I,—what I seem to my friend, you see— What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess. What I seem to myself, do you ask of me? No hero, I confess.

XII.

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own.

Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals
He played with for bits of stone!

XIII.

One likes to show the truth for the truth;
That the woman was light is very true:
But suppose she says,—never mind that youtn—
What wrong have I done to you?

XIV.

Well, any how, here the story stays, So far at least as I understand; And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays, Here's a subject made to your hand!

THE STATUE AND THE BUST.

THERE'S a palace in Florence, the world knows well, And a statue watches it from the square, And this story of both do the townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there, At the farthest window facing the east Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

The brides-maids' prattle around her ceased; She leaned forth, one on either hand; They saw how the blush of the bride increased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand— As one at each ear and both in a breath Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

That selfsame instant, underneath, The Duke rode past in his idle way, Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back—"Who is she?"
—"A Bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps laid heavily Over a pale brow spirit-pure— Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure— Which vainly sought to dissemble her eyes Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,— The Duke grew straightway brave and wise. He looked at her, as a lover can; She looked at him, as one who awakes,— The past was a sleep, and her life began.

As love so ordefed for both their sakes, A feast was held that selfsame night In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light, But the Palace overshadows one, Because of a crime which may God requite!

To Florence and God the wrong was done, Through the first republic's murder there By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square) Turned in the midst of his multitude At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred, As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word? If a word did pass, which I do not think, Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink He and his bride were alone at last In a bed-chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was east, That the door she had passed was shut on her Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir, Through a certain window facing the east She might watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast, And a feast might lead to so much beside, He, of many evils, chose the least.

"Freely I choose too," said the bride"Your window and its world suffice,"
So replied the tongue, while the heart replied-

'If I spend the night with that devil twice, May his window serve as my bop of hell Whence a danned soul looks on l'aradise!

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well, Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow Ere I count another ave-bell.

"'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow, And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim, And I save my soul—but not to-morrow"—

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)— "My father tarries to bless my state: I must keep it one day more for him.

"Is one day more so long to wait? Moreover the Duke rides past, I know— We shall see each other, sure as fate."

She turned on her side and slept. Just so! So we resolve on a thing and sleep. So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, "Dear or cheap As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove To body or soul, I will drain it deep."

And on the morrow, bold with love, He-beckened the bridegroom (close on call, As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled "'Twas a very funeral Your lady will think, this feast of ours, A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

"What if we break from the Arno bowers, And let Petraja, cool and green, Cure last night's fault with this morning's flowers?"

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen On his steady brow and quiet mouth, Said, "Too much favour for me so mean!

"Alas! my lady leaves the south. Each wind that comes from the Apennine Is a menace to her tender youth.

"No way exists, the wise opine, If she quits her palace twice this year, To avert the flower of life's decline." Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear. Moreover Petraja is cold this spring -Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself—"Which night shall bring Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool— Or I am the fool, and thou art his king!

"Yet my passion must wait a night. nor cool—For to-night the Envoy arrives from France, Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

"I need thee still and might miss perchance. To-day is not wholly lost, beside, With its hope of my lady's countenance—

"For I ride—what should I do but ride? And passing her palace, if I list, May glance at its window—well betide!"

So said, so done: nor the lady missed One ray that broke from the ardent brow, Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow, No morrow's sun should arise and set And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet, With still fresh cause to wait one more Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore, With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh, They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly, But not in despite of heaven and earth— The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth By winter's fruits that supplant the rose: The world and its ways have a certain worth!

And to press a point while these oppose Were a simple policy—best wait, And lose no friends and gain no foes.

Meanwhile, worse fates than a lover's fate, Who daily may ride and lean and look Where his lady watches behind the grate! And she—she watched the square like a book Holding one picture and only one, Which daily to find she undertook.

When the picture was reached the book was done, And she turned from it all night to scheme Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

Weeks grew months, years—gleam by gleam The glory dropped from youth and love, And both perceived they had dreamed a dream,

Which hovered as dreams do, still above,—But who can take a dream for truth? Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth Depart, and the silver thread that streaked Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,—And wondered who the woman was, So hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass—
"Summon here," she suddenly said,
"Before the rest of my old self pass,

- "Him, the Carver, a hand to aid, Who moulds the clay no love will change, And fixes a beauty never to fade.
- "Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange Arrest the remains of young and fair, And rivet them while the seasons range.
- "Make me a face on the window there Waiting as ever, mute the while, My love to pass below in the square!
- "And let me think that it may beguile Dreary days which the dead must spend Down in their darkness under the aisle—
- "To say,—'What matters at the end? I did no more while my heart was warm, Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.'
- "Where is the use of the lip's red charm, The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow, And the blood that blues the inside arm—

Unless we turn, as the soul knows how, The earthly gift to an end divine? A lady of clay is as good, I trow."

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace, Was set where now is the empty shrine—____

(With, leaning out of a bright blue space, As a ghost might from a chink of sky, The passionate pale lady's face—

Eyeing ever with earnest eye And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch, Some one who ever passes by—)

The Duke sighed like the simplest wretch In Florence, "So, my dream escapes! Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle fashioner of shapes—. "Can the soul, the will, die out of a man Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

"John of Douay shall work my plan, Mould me on horseback here aloft, Alive—(the subtle artisan!)

"In the very square I cross so oft! That men may admire, when future suns Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow are brave in bronzo-Admire and say, 'When he was alive, How he would take his pleasure once!'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive To listen meanwhile and laugh in my tomb At indolence which aspires to strive."

So! while these wait the trump of doom, How do their spirits pass, I wonder, Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder What a gift life was, ages ago, Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Surely they see not God, I know, Nor all that chivalry of His, The soldier-saints who, row on row, Burn upward each to his point of bliss—Since, the end of life being manifest, He had cut his way thro' the world to this.

I hear your reproach—"But delay was best, For their end was a crime!"—Oh, a crime will do As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through, Sufficient to vindicate itself And prove its worth at a moment's view.

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf? Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham. As well the counter as coin, I submit, When your table's a hat, and your prize, a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit, Venture as truly, use the same skill, Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play—is my principle! Let a man contend to the uttermost For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost As surely as if it were lawful coin: And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Was, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin, Though the end in sight was a crime, I say. You of the virtue, (we issue join) How strive you? De te, fabula!

LOVE IN A LIFE.

I.

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her,
Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her

Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume! As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew,—You looking glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II.

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?
But 'tis twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE.

Escape me? Never— Beloved!

While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both,
Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one eludes, must the other pursue.
My life is a fault at last, I fear—
It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed—
But what if I fail of my purpose here?

It is but to keep the nerves at strain,

To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And baffled, get up to begin again,—

So the chace takes up one's life, that's all.
While, look but once from your farthest bound,
At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope drops to ground

Than a new one, straight to the selfsame mark,

I shape me—

Ever

Removed!

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY.

I only knew one poet in my life: And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid, A man of mark, to know next time you saw. His very serviceable suit of black Was courtly once and conscientious still, And many might have worn it, though none did: The cloak that somewhat shone and shewed the threads Had purpose, and the ruff, significance. He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane, Scenting the world, looking it full in face, An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels. They turned up, now, the alley by the church, That leads no whither; now, they breathed themselves On the main promenade just at the wrong time. You'd come upon his scrutinising hat, Making a peaked shade blacker than itself Against the single window spared some house Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work,— Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks Of some new shop a-building, French and fine. He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade, The man who slices lemons into drink, The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys That volunteer to help him turn its winch. He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye, And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string, And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall. He took such cognisance of men and things, If any beat a horse, you felt he saw; If any cursed a woman, he took note; Yet stared at nobody,—they stared at him, And found, less to their pleasure than surprise, He seemed to know them and expect as much. So, next time that a neighbour's tongue was loosed, It marked the shameful and notorious fact. We had among us, not so much a spy, As a recording chief-inquisitor, The town's true master if the town but knew!

We merely kept a Governor for form, While this man walked about and took account Of all thought, said, and acted, then went home, And wrote it fully to our Lord the King Who has an itch to know things, He knows why, And reads them in His bed-room of a night. Oh, you might smile! there wanted not a touch. A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease As back into your mind the man's look came-Stricken in years a little,—such a brow His eyes had to live under !-- clear as flint On either side the formidable nose Curved, cut, and coloured, like an eagle's claw. Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate? When altogether old B. disappeared And young C. got his mistress, -- was't our friend, His letter to the King, that did it all? What paid the bloodless man for so much pains? Our Lord the King has favourites manifold, And shifts his ministry some once a month; Our city gets new Governors at whiles,— But never word or sign, that I could hear, Notified to this man about the streets The King's approval of those letters conned The last thing duly at the dead of night. Did the man love his office? frowned our Lord, Exhorting when none heard—"Beseech me not! Too far above my people,—beneath Me! I set the watch,—how should the people know? Forget them, keep Me all the more in mind!" Was some such understanding 'twixt the Two?

I found no truth in one report at least-That if you tracked him to his home, down lanes Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace, You found he ate his supper in a room Blazing with lights, four Titians on the wall, And twenty naked girls to change his plate! Poor man, he lived another kind of life In that new, stuccoed, third house by the bridge, Fresh-painted, rather smart than otherwise! The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat, Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back. Playing a decent cribbage with his maid (Jacynth, you're sure her name was) o'er the cheese And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears, Or treat of radishes in April! nine— Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he. My father, like the man of sense he was, Would point him out to me a dozen times; "St—St," he'd whisper, "the Corregidor!" I had been used to think that personage Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt, And feathers like a forest in his hat, Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news, Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn, And memorized the miracle in vogue! He had a great observance from us boys—I was in error; that was not the man.

I'd like now, yet had haply been afraid, To have just looked, when this man came to die, And seen who lined the clean gay garret's sides And stood about the neat low truckle-bed. With the heavenly manner of relieving guard. Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief, Thro' a whole campaign of the world's life and death, Doing the King's work all the dim day long, In his old coat, and up to his knees in mud, Smoked like a herring, dining on a crust,-And now the day was won, relieved at once! No further show or need for that old coat, You are sure, for one thing! Bless us, all the while How sprucely we are dressed out, you and I! A second, and the angels alter that. Well. I could never write a verse,—could you? Let's to the Prado and make the most of time.

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER.

I.

I said—Then, dearest, since 'tis so, Since now at length my fate I know, Since nothing all my love avails, Since all my life seemed meant for, fails, Since this was written and needs must be—My whole heart rises up to bless Your name in pride and thankfulness!

Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

IΙ.

My mistress bent that brow of hers,
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
With life or death in the balance—Right!
The blood replenished me again:
My last thought was at least not vain.
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So one day more am I deified.

Who knows but the world may end to-night?

III.

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once—
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

IV.

Then we began to ride. My soul Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll Freshening and fluttering in the wind. Past hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated,—who can tell?
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

v.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds? Why, all men strive and who succeeds? We rode; it seemed my spirit flew, Saw other regions, cities new,

As the world rushed by on either side.

I thought, All labour, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty Done the Undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me. Here we ride.

VI.

What hand and brain went ever paired? What heart alike conceived and dared? What act proved all its thought had been? What will but felt the fleshly screen?

We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

VII.

What does it all mean, poet? well, Your brain's beat into rhythm—you tell What we felt only; you expressed You hold things beautiful the best,

And pace them in rhyme so, side by side. 'Tis something, nay 'tis much—but then, Have you yourself what's best for men? Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—Nearer one whit your own sublime Than we who never have turned a rhyme? Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

VIII.

And you, great sculptor—so you gave A score of years to art, her slave, And that's your Venus—whence we turn To yonder girl that fords the burn! You acquiesce and shall I repine? What, man of music, you, grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
"But in music we know how fashions end!"
I gave my youth—but we ride, in fine.

IX.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being; had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
—Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest—
Earth being so good, would Heaven seem best?
Now, Heaven and she are beyond this ride.

х.

And yet—she has not spoke so long!
What if Heaven be, that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And Heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

THE PATRIOT.

AN OLD STORY.

T.

It was roses, roses, all the way,
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad.
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day!

II.

The air broke into a mist with bells,

The old walls rocked with the crowds and cries.

Had I said, "Good folks, mere noise repels—

But give me your sun from yonder skies!"

They had answered, "And afterward, what else?"

III.

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun,
To give it my loving friends to keep.
Nought man could do have I left undone,
And you see my harvest, what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

IV.

There's nobody on the house-tops now— Just a palsied few at the windows set— For the best of the sight is, all allow, At the Shambles' Gate—or, better yet, By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

v.

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind,
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

VI.

Thus I entered Brescia, and thus I go!
In such triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
"Thou, paid by the World,—what dost thou owe
Me?" God might have questioned: but now instead
'Tis God shall requite! I am safer so.

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA.

I.

Hist, but a word, fair and soft!
Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!
Answer the question I've put you so oft—
What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?
See, we're alone in the loft,

II.

I, the poor organist here,
Hugues, the composer of note—
Dead, though, and done with, this many a year—
Let's have a colloquy, something to quote,
Make the world prick up its ear!

III.

See, the church empties a-pace.

Fast they extinguish the lights—
Hallo, there, sacristan! five minutes' grace!

Here's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,
Baulks one of holding the base.

IV.

See, our huge house of the sounds
Hushing its hundreds at once,
Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds
—Oh, you may challenge them, not a response
Get the church saints on their rounds!

v.

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?
—March, with the moon to admire,
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,
Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
Put rats and mice to the rout—

VI.

Aloys and Jurien and Just— Order things back to their place, Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust, Rub the church plate, darn the sacrament lace, Clear the desk velvet of dust.)

VII.

Here's your book, younger folks shelve!
Played I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?
Here's what should strike,—could one handle it cunningly
Help the axe, give it a helve!

VIII.

Page after page as I played,
Every bar's rest where one wipes
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed
O'er my three claviers, yon forest of piges
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

IX.

Sure you were wishful to speak,
You, with brow ruled like a score,
Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
Like two great breves as they wrote them of yore
Each side that bar, your straight beak!

x.

Sure you said—"Good, the mere notes!
Still, couldst thou take my intent,
Know what procured me our Company's votes—
Masters being lauded and sciolists shent,
Parted the sheep from the goats!"

XI.

Well then, speak up, never flinch i
Quick, ere my candle's a snuff

-Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch—
I believe in you, but that's not enough.

Give my conviction a clinch!

XII.

First you deliver your phrase

—Nothing propound, that I see,
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—

Answered no less, where no answer needs be:
Off start the Two on their ways!

XIII.

Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help—
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose.
So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,
Argument's hot to the close!

XIV.

One dissertates, he is candid—
Two must discept,—has distinguished!
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did:
Four protests, Five makes a dart at the thing wished-Back to One, goes the case bandied!

XV.

One says his say with a difference—
More of expounding, explaining!
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance—
Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-restrainingFivo, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

XVI.

One is incisive, corrosive—
Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant—
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive—
Four overbears them all. strident and strepitant—
Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve!

xvII.

Now, they ply axes and crowbars—
Now, they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?
Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

XVIII.

Est fuga, volvitur rota!
On we drift. Where looms the dim port?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota—
Something is gained, if one caught but the import—
Show it us—Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

XIX.

What with affirming, denying,
Holding, risposting, subjoining,
All's like . . . it's like . . . for an instance I'm trying . .
There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
Under those spider-webs lying

XX.

So your fugue broadens and thickens, Greatens and deepens and lengthens, Till one exclaims—"But where's music, the dickens? Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?"

XXI.

I for man's effort am zealous.

Prove me such censure's unfounded!

Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—

Hopes 'twas for something his organ-pipes sounded

Tiring three boys at the bellows?

xxII.

Is it your moral of Life?
Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife?

E E 2

XXIII.

Over our heads Truth and Nature—
Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs weaving a new legislature—
God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
Palled beneath Man's usurpature'

XXIV.

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
Cherub and trophy and garland.
Nothings grow something which quietly closes
Heaven's earnest eye,—not a glimpse of the far land
Gets through our comments and glozes.

XXV.

Ah, but traditions, inventions,
(Say we and make up a visage)
So many men with such various intentions
Down the past ages must know more than this age!
Leave the web all its dimensions!

XXVI.

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf?
Proved a mere mountain in labour?
Better submit—try again—what's the clef?
'Faith, it's no trifle for pipe and for taborFour flats—the minor in F.

XXVII.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger.

Learning it once, who would lose it?

Yet all the while a misgiving will linger—

Trutl.'s golden o'er us although we refuse it—

Nature, thro' dust-clouds we fling her!

XXVIII.

Hugues! I advise med pænå
(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena!
Say the word, straight I unstop the Full-Organ,
Blare out the mode Palestrina.

XXIX.

While in the roof, if I'm right there—
... Lo, you, the wick in the socket!
Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
Down it dips, gone like a rocket!
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,
And find a poor devil at end of his cares
At the foot of your rotten-planked rat-riddled stairs?
Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY.

No more wine? then we'll push back chairs and talk. A final glass for me, tho': cool, i'faith! We ought to have our Abbey back, you see. It's different, preaching in basilicas, And doing duty in some masterpiece Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his heart! I doubt if they're half baked, those chalk rosettes, Ciphers and stucco-twiddlings everywhere; It's just like breathing in a lime-kiln: ch? These hot long ceremonies of our church Cost us a little—oh, they pay the price, You take me—amply pay it! Now, we'll talk.

So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.
No deprecation,—nay, I beg you, sir!
Beside 'tis our engagement: don't you know,
I promised, if you'd watch a dinner out,
We'd see truth dawn together?—truth that peeps
Over the glass's edge when dinner's done,
And body gets its sop and holds its noise
And leaves soul free a little. Now's the time—
'Tis break of day! You do despise me then.
And if I say, "despise me,"—never fear—
I know you do not in a certain sense—
Not in my arm-chair for example: here,
I well imagine you respect my place
(Status, entourage, worldly circumstance)

Quite to its value—very much indeed —Are up to the protesting eyes of you In pride at being seated here for once— You'll turn it to such capital account! When somebody, through years and years to come, Hints of the bishop,—names me—that's enough— "Blougram? I knew him "—(into it you slide) "Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi Day, All alone, we too—he's a clever man— And after dinner,—why, the wine you know,— Oh, there was wine, and good!—what with the wine . . . 'Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk! He's no bad fellow, Blougram—he had seen Something of mine he relished—some review— He's quite above their humbug in his heart, Half-said as much, indeed—the thing's his trade— I warrant, Blougram's sceptical at times— How otherwise? I liked him, I confess!" Che ch'é, my dear sir, as we say at Rome, Don't you protest now! It's fair give and take; You have had your turn and spoken your home-truths— The hand's mine now, and here you follow suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first fact stays— You do despise me; your ideal of life Is not the bishop's—you would not be I— You would like better to be Goethe, now, Or Buonaparte—or, bless me, lower still, Count D'Orsay,—so you did what you preferred, Spoke as you thought, and, as you cannot help, Believed or disbelieved, no matter what, So long as on that point, whate'er it was, You loosed your mind, were whole and sole yourself. -That, my ideal never can include, Upon that element of truth and worth Never be based! for say they make me Pope (They can't—suppose it for our argument) Why, there I'm at my tether's end-I've reached My height, and not a height which pleases you. An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say. It's like those eerie stories nurges tell, Of how some actor played Death on a stage With pasteboard crown, sham orb, and tinselled dart, And called himself the monarch of the world, Then going in the tire-room afterward Because the play was done, to shift himself, Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly The moment he had shut the closet door

By Death himself. Thus God might touch a Pope At unawares, ask what his baubles mean, And whose part he presumed to play just now? Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true!

So, drawing comfortable breath again,
You weigh and find whatever more or less
I boast of my ideal realised
Is nothing in the balance when opposed
To your ideal, your grand simple life,
Of which you will not realise one jot.
I am much, you are nothing; you would be all,
I would be merely much—you beat me there.

No, friend, you do not beat me,—hearken why. The common problem, yours, mine, every one's, Is not to fancy what were fair in life Provided it could be,—but, finding first What may be, then find how to make it fair Up to our means—a very different thing! No abstract intellectual plan of life Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws, But one, a man, who is man and nothing more, May lead within a world which (by your leave) Is Rome or London—not Fool's-paradise. Embellish Rome, idealise away, Make Paradise of London if you can, You're welcome, nay, you're wise.

A simile!

We mortals cross the ocean of this world •Each in his average cabin of a life— The best's not big. the worst yields elbow-room. Now for our six months' voyage—how prepare? You come on shipboard with a landsman's list Of things he calls convenient—so they are ! An India screen is pretty furniture, A piano-forte is a fine resource, All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf, The new edition fifty volumes long; And little Greek books with the funny type They get up well at Leipsic fill the next-Go on! slabbed marble, what a bath it makes! And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us add! 'Twere pleasant could Correggio's fleeting glow Hang full in face of one where'er one roams, Since he more than the others brings with him Italy's self,—the marvellous Modenese!

Yet 'twas not on your list before, perhaps. Alas! friend, here's the agent . . . is't the name? The captain, or whoever's master here-You see him screw his face up; what's his cry Ere you set foot on shipboard? "Six feet square! If you won't understand what six feet mean, Compute and purchase stores accordingly— And if in pique because he overhauls Your Jerome, piano and bath, you come on board Bare—why you cut a figure at the first While sympathetic landsmen see you off; Not afterwards, when, long ere half seas o'er, You peep up from your utterly naked boards Into some snug and well-appointed berth Like mine, for instance (try the cooler jug— Put back the other, but don't jog the ice), And mortified you mutter "Well and good — He sits enjoying his sea-furniture— 'Tis stout and proper, and there's store of it, Though I've the better notion, all agree, Of fitting rooms up! hang the carpenter, Neat ship-shape fixings and contrivances— I would have brought my Jerome, frame and all!" And meantime you bring nothing: never mind— You've proved your artist-nature: what you don't, You might bring, so despise me, as I say.

Now come, let's backward to the starting place. See my way: we're two college friends, suppose—Prepare together for our voyage, then, Each note and check the other in his work,—Here's mine, a bishop's outfit; criticise! What's wrong? why won't you be a bishop too?

Why, first, you don't believe, you don't and can't (Not statedly, that is, and fixedly And absolutely and exclusively)
In any revelation called divine.
No dogmas nail your faith—and what remains But say so, like the honest man you are?
First, therefore, overhaul theology!
Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to think,
Must find believing every whit as hard,
And if I do not frankly say as much,
The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now, wait, my friend: well, I do not believe—If you'll accept no faith that is not fixed,

Absolute and exclusive, as you say.
(You're wrong—I mean to prove it in due time)
Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie
I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall,
So give up hope accordingly to solve—
(To you, and over the wine). Our dogmas then
With both of us, tho' in unlike degree,
Missing full credence—overboard with them!
I mean to meet you on your own premise—
Good, there go mine in company with yours!

And now what are we? unbelievers both, Calm and complete, determinately fixed To-day, to-morrow, and for ever, pray? You'll guarantee me that? Not so, I think. In no-wise! all we've gained is, that belief, As unbelief before, shakes us by fits, Confounds us like its predecessor, The gain? how can we guard our unbelief, Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem here. Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch, A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death, A chorus ending from Euripides,— And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears As old and new at once as Nature's self, To rap and knock and enter in our soul, Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring, Round the ancient idol, on his base again,— The grand Perhaps! we look on helplessly,— There the old misgivings, crooked questions are --This good God,—what he could do, if he would, Would, if he could—then must have done long since: If so, when, where, and how? some way must be,— Once feel about, and soon or late you hit Some sense, in which it might be, after all. Why not, "The Way, the Truth, the Life?"

-That way

Over the mountain, which who stands upon
Is apt to doubt if it's indeed a road;
While if he views it from the waste itself,
Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,
Not vague, mistakeable! what's a break or two
Seen from the unbroken desert either side?
And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)
What if the breaks themselves should prove at last
The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith,—

And so we stumble at truth's very test?
What have we gained then by our unbelief
But a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt.
We called the chess-board white,—we call it black.

"Well," you rejoin, "the end's no worse, at least, We've reason for both colours on the board. Why not confess, then, where I drop the faith And you the doubt, that I'm as right as you?"

Because, friend, in the next place, this being so, And both things even,—faith and unbelief Left to a man's choice,—we'll proceed a step, Returning to our image, which I like.

A man's choice, yes—but a cabin-passenger's— The man made for the special life of the world— Do you forget him? I remember though! Consult our ship's conditions and you find One and but one choice suitable to all, The choice that you unluckily prefer Turning things topsy-turvy—they or it Going to the ground. Belief or unbelief Bears upon life, determines its whole course, Begins at its beginning. See the world Such as it is,—you made it not, nor I; I mean to take it as it is,—and you Not so you'll take it,—though you get nought else I know the special kind of life I like, What suits the most my idiosyncrasy, Brings out the best of me and bears me fruit In power, peace, pleasantness, and length of days I find that positive belief does this For me, and unbelief, no whit of this. -For you, it does, however—that we'll try! 'Tis clear, I cannot lead my life, at least Induce the world to let me peaceably. Without declaring at the outset, "Friends, I absolutely and peremptorily Believe!"—I say faith is my waking life. One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals, We know, but waking's the main point with us, And my provision's for life's waking part. Accordingly, I use heart, head and hands All day, I build, scheme, study and make friends. And when night overtakes me, down I lie, Sleep, dream a little, and get done with it, The sooner the better, to begin afresh.

What's midnight's doubt before the dayspring's faith? You, the philosopher, that disbelieve, That recognise the night, give dreams their weight-To be consistent you should keep your bed, Abstain from healthy acts that prove you a man, For fear you drowse perhaps at unawares! And certainly at night you'll sleep and dream, Live through the day and bustle as you please. And so you live to sleep as I to wake, To unbelieve as I to still believe? Well, and the common sense of the world calls you Bed-ridden,—and its good things come to me. Its estimation, which is half the fight, That's the first cabin-comfort I secure— The next . . . but you perceive with half an eye! Come, come, it's best believing, if we can-You can't but own that.

Next, concede again— If once we choose belief, on all accounts We can't be too decisive in our faith, Conclusive and exclusive in its terms, To suit the world which gives us the good things. In every man's career are certain points Whereon he dares not be indifferent; The world detects him clearly, if he is, As baffled at the game, and losing life. He may care little or he may care much For riches, honour, pleasure, work, repose, Since various theories of life and life's Success are extant which might easily Comport with either estimate of these, •And whose chooses wealth or poverty, Labour or quiet, is not judged a fool Because his fellows would choose otherwise. We let him choose upon his own account So long as he's consistent with his choice. But certain points, left wholly to himself, When once a man has arbitrated on, We say he must succeed there or go hang. Thus, he should wed the woman he loves most Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or need-For he can't wed twice. Then, he must avouch Or follow, at the least, sufficiently, The form of faith his conscience holds the best, Whate'er the process of conviction was. For nothing can compensate his mistake On such a point, the man himself being judge-He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his soul.

Well now—there's one great form of Christian faith I happened to be born in—which to teach Was given me as I grew up, on all hands, As best and readiest means of living by; The same on examination being proved The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise And absolute form of faith in the whole world— Accordingly, most potent of all forms For working on the world. Observe, my friend, Such as you know me, I am free to say, In these hard latter days which hamper one, Myself, by no immoderate exercise Of intellect and learning, and the tact To let external forces work for me, Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread, Bid Peter's creed, or, rather, Hildebrand's, Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world And make my life an ease and joy and pride, It does so,—which for me's a great point gained, Who have a soul and body that exact A comfortable care in many ways. There's power in me and will to dominate Which I must exercise, they hurt me else: In many ways I need mankind's respect, Obedience, and the love that's born of fear: While at the same time, there's a taste I have, A toy of soul, a titillating thing, Refuses to digest these dainties crude. The naked life is gross till clothed upon: I must take what men offer, with a grace As though I would not, could I help it, take ! A uniform to wear though over-rich-Something imposed on me, no choice of mine; No fancy-dress worn for pure fashion's sake And despicable therefore! now men kneel And kiss my hand—of course the Church's hand. Thus I am made, thus life is best for me, And thus that it should be I have procured; And thus it could not be another way, I venture to imagine.

You'll reply—
So far my choice, no doubt, is a success;
But were I made of better elements,
With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like you,
I hardly would account the thing success
Though it do all for me I say.

But, friend, We speak of what is-not of what might be, And how 'twere better if 'twere otherwise. I am the man you see here plain enough— Grant I'm a beast, why beasts must lead beasts' lives! Suppose I own at once to tail and claws— The tailless man exceeds me; but being tailed I'll lash out lion-fashion, and leave ares To dock their stump and dress their haunches up. My business is not to remake myself, But make the absolute best of what God made. Or-our first simile-though you proved me doomed To a viler berth still, to the steerage-hole. The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should strive To make what use of each were possible: And as this cabin gets upholstery, That hutch should rustle with sufficient straw.

But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so fast I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes Enumerated so complacently, On the mere ground that you forsooth can find In this particular life I choose to lead No fit provision for them. Can you not? Say you, my fault is I address myself To grosser estimators than I need, And that's no way of holding up the soul— Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools',— Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that? I pine among my million imbeciles (You think) aware some dozen men of sense Eye me and know me, whether I believe In the last winking Virgin, as I vow, And am a fool, or disbelieve in her, And am a knave,—approve in neither case, Withhold their voices though I look their way: Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end (The thing they gave at Florence,—what's its name?) While the mad houseful's plaudits near out-bang His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones, He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here— For even your prime men who appraise their kind Are men still, catch a thing within a thing, See more in a truth than the truth's simple self, Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street Sixty the minute; what's to note in that? You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack; Him you must watch—he's sure to fall, yet stands! Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things. The honest thief, the tender murderer, The superstitious atheist, demires That love and save their souls in new French books-We watch while these in equilibrium keep The giddy line midway: one step aside, They're classed and done with. I, then, keep the line Before your sages,—just the men to shrink From the gross weights, coarse scales, and labels broad You offer their refinment. Fool or knave? Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave When there's a thousand diamond weights between? So I enlist them. Your picked Twelve, you'll find, Profess themselves indignant, scandalised At thus being held unable to explain How a superior man who disbelieves May not believe as well: that's Schelling's way! It's through my coming in the tail of time, Nicking the minute with a happy tact. Had I been born three hundred years ago They'd say, "What's strange? Blougram of course believes : "

And, seventy years since, "disbelieves of course." But now, "He may believe; and yet, and yet How can he?"—All eyes turn with interest. Whereas, step off the line on either side-You, for example, clever to a fault, The rough and ready man that write apace, Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less— You disbelieve! Who wonders and who cares? Lord So-and-So-his coat bedropt with wax, All Peter's chains about his waist, his back Brave with the needlework of Noodledom, Believes! Again, who wonders and who cares? But I, the man of sense and learning too, The able to think yet act, the this, the that, I, to believe at this late time of day! Enough; you see, I need not fear contempt.

—Except it's yours! admire me as these may, You don't. But what at least do you admire? Present your own perfections, your ideal, Your pattern man for a minute—oh, make haste! Is it Napoleon you would have us grow?

Concede the means; allow his head and hand, (A large concession, clever as you are) Good!—In our common primal element Of unbelief (we can't believe, you know-We're still at that admission, recollect) Where do you find—apart from, towering-o'er The secondary temporary aims Which satisfy the gross tastes you despise— Where do you find his star?—his crazy trust God knows through what or in what? it's alive And shines and leads him and that's all we want. Have we aught in our sober night shall point Such ends as his were, and direct the means Of working out our purpose straight as his, Nor bring a moment's trouble on success With after-care to justify the same? -Be a Napoleon and yet disbelieve! Why, the man's mad, friend, take his light away. What's the vague good of the world for which you'd dare With comfort to yourself blow millions up? We neither of us see it! we do see The blown-up millions—spatter of their brains And writhing of their bowels and so forth, In that bewildering entanglement Of horrible eventualities Past calculation to the end of time! Can I mistake for some clear word of God (Which were my ample warrant for it all) His puff of hazy instincts, idle talk, "The state, that's I," quack-nonsense about kings, And (when one beats the man to his last hold) The vague idea of setting things to rights, Policing people efficaciously, More to their profit, most of all to his own: The whole to end that dismallest of ends By an Austrian marriage, cant to us the church, And resurrection of the old régime. Would I, who hope to live a dozen years, Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and such? No: for, concede me but the merest chance Doubt may be wrong—there's judgment, life to come! With just that chance, I dare not. Doubt proves right? This present life is all? you offer me Its dozen noisy years with not a chance That wedding an Arch Duchess, wearing lace, And getting called by divers new-coined names, Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me dine,

Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like! Therefore, I will not.

Take another case; Fit up the cabin yet another way. What say ye to the poet's? shall we write Hamlets, Othellos—make the world our own, Without a risk to run of either sort? I can't!—to put the strongest reason first. "But try," you urge, "the trying shall suffice: The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life. Try to be Shakspeare, leave the rest to fate!" Spare my self-knowledge—there's no fooling me! If I prefer remaining my poor self, I say so not in self-dispraise but praise. If I'm a Shakspeare, let the well alone— Why should I try to be what now I am? If I'm no Shakspeare, as too probable,-His power and consciousness and self-delight And all we want in common, shall I find— Trying for ever? while on points of taste Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he and I Are dowered alike—I'll ask you, I or he, Which in our two lives realises most? Much, he imagined—somewhat, I possess. He had the imagination; stick to that! Let him say "In the face of my soul's works Your world is worthless and I touch it not Lest I should wrong them "-I withdraw my plea. But does he say so? look upon his life! Himself, who only can, gives judgment there. He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces To build the trimmest house in Stratford town; Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of things, Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's lute; Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too, And none more, had he seen its entry once, Than "Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal." Why then should I who play that personage, The very Pandulph Shakspeare's fancy made, Be told that had the poet chanced to start From where I stand now (some degree like mine Being just the goal he ran his race to reach) He would have run the whole race back, forsooth, And left being Pandulph, to begin write plays? Ah, the earth's best can be but the earth's best! Did Shakspeare live, he could but sit at home

And get himself in dreams the Vatican, Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls, And English books, none equal to his own, Which I read, bound in gold, (he never did.) -Terni and Naples' bay and Gothard's top-Eh, friend? I could not fancy one of these-But, as I pour this claret, there they are— I've gained them—crossed St. Gothard last July With ten mules to the carriage and a bed Slung inside; is my hap the worse for that? We want the same things, Shakspeare and myself, And what I want, I have: he, gifted more, Could fancy he too had it when he liked, But not so thoroughly that if fate allowed He would not have it also in my sense. We play one game. I send the ball aloft No less adroitly that of fifty strokes Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and high Which sends them back to me: I wish and get. He struck balls higher and with better skill, But at a poor fence level with his head, And hit—his Stratford house, a coat of arms, Successful dealings in his grain and wool,— While I receive heaven's incense in my nose And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess. Ask him, if this life's all, who wins the game?

Believe—and our whole argument breaks up. Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat; Only, we can't command it; fire and life Are all, dead matter's nothing, we agree: And be it a mad dream or God's very breath, The fact's the same,—belief's fire once in us, Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself. We penetrate our life with such a glow As fire lends wood and iron—this turns steel, That burns to ash—all's one, fire proves its power For good or ill, since men call flare success. But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn. Light one in me, I'll find it food enough! Why, to be Luther—that's a life to lead, Incomparably better than my own. He comes, reclaims God's earth for God, he says, Sets up God's rule again by simple means, Re-opens a shut book, and all is done. He flared out in the flaring of mankind; Such Luther's luck was—how shall such be mine? If he succeeded, nothing's left to do:

And if he did not altogether—well, Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be I might be also. But to what result? He looks upon no future: Luther did. What can I gain on the denying side? Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts. Read the text right, emancipate the world-The emancipated world enjoys itself With scarce a thank-you—Blougram told it first It could not owe a farthing,—not to him More than St. Paul! 'twould press its pay, you think? Then add there's still that plaguey hundredth chance Strauss may be wrong. And so h risk is run— For what gain? not for Luther's, who secured A real heaven in his heart throughout his life, Supposing death a little altered things!

"Ay, but since really I lack faith," you cry,
"I run the same risk really on all sides,
In cool indifference as bold unbelief.
As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.
It's not worth having, such imperfect faith,
Nor more available to do faith's work
Than unbelief like yours. Whole faith, or none!"

Softly, my friend! I must dispute that point. Once own the use of faith, I'll find you faith We're back on Christian ground. You call for faith: I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists. The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say, If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does? By life and man's free will, God gave for that! To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice: That's our one act, the previous work's His own. You criticise the soil? it reared this tree— This broad life and whatever fruit it bears! What matter though I doubt at every pore, Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends. Doubts in the trivial work of every day, Doubts at the very bases of my soul In the grand moments when she probes herself— If finally I have a life to show, The thing I did, brought out in evidence Against the thing done to me underground By Hell and all its brood, for aught I know? I say, whence sprang this? shows it faith or doubt? All's doubt in me; where's break of faith in this? It is the idea, the feeling and the love God means mankind should strive for and show forth,

Whatever be the process to that end,— And not historic knowledge, logic sound, And metaphysical acumen, sure! "What think ye of Christ," friend? when all's done and said, You like this Christianity or not? It may be false, but will you wish it true? Has it your vote to be so if it can? Trust you an instinct silenced long ago That will break silence and enjoin you love What mortified philosophy is hoarse. And all in vain, with bidding you despise? If you desire faith—then you've faith enough. What else seeks God-nay, what else seek ourselves? You form a notion of me, we'll suppose, On hearsay; it's a favourable one: "But still," (you add) "there was no such good man, Because of contradictions in the facts. One proves, for instance, he was born in Rome, This Blougram—yet throughout the tales of him I see he figures as an Englishman." Well, the two things are reconcileable. But would I rather you discovered that,

Pure faith indeed—you know not what you ask Naked belief in God the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much The sense of conscious creatures to be borne. It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare. Some think, Creation's meant to show him forth: I'say, it's meant to hide him all it can, And that's what all the blessed Evil's for. Its use in time is to environ us, Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough Against that sight till we can bear its stress. Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain And lidless eye and disemprisoned heart Less certainly would wither up at once Than mind, confronted with the truth of Him. But time and earth case-harden us to live; The feeblest sense is trusted most; the child Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place, Plays on and grows to be a man like us. With me, faith means perpetual unbelief Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe. Or, if that's too ambitious,—here's my box—

Subjoining—" Still, what matter though they be? Blougram concerns me nought, born here or there."

I need the excitation of a pinch Threatening the torpor of the inside-nose Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes. "Leave it in peace"—advise the simple folk—Make it aware of peace by itching-fits, Say I—let doubt occasion still more faith!

You'll say, once all believed, man, woman, child, In that dear middle-age these noodles praise. How you'd exult if I could put you back Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony, Geology, ethnology, what not, (Greek endings with the little passing-bell That signifies some faith's about to die) And set you square with Genesis again,-When such a traveller told you his last news, He saw the ark a-top of Ararat But did not climb there since 'twas getting dusk And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot! How should you feel, I ask, in such an age, How act? As other people felt and did; With soul more blank than this decanter's knob, Believe-and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate Full in belief's face, like the beast you'd be!

No, when the fight begins within himself, A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head, Satan looks up between his feet-both tug-He's left, himself, in the middle: the soul wakes And grows. Prolong that battle through his life! Never leave growing till the life to come! Here, we've got callous to the Virgin's winks That used to puzzle people wholesomely— Men have outgrown the shame of being fools. What are the laws of Nature, not to bend If the Church bid them, brother Newman asks. Up with the Immaculate Conception, then— On to the rack with faith—is my advice! Will not that hurry us upon our knees Knocking our breasts, "It can't be—yet it shall! Who am I, the worm, to argue with my Pope? Low things confound the high things!" and so forth. That's better than acquitting God with grace As some folks do. He's tried—no case is proved, Philosophy is lenient—He may go!

You'll say—the old system's not so obsolete But men believe still: ay, but who and where? King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet
The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes;
But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint
Believes God watches him continually,
As he believes in fire that it will burn,
Or rain that it will drench him? Break fire's law,
Sin against rain, although the penalty
Be just a singe or soaking? No, he smiles;
Those laws are laws that can enforce themselves.

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is great, My faith's the greater—then my faith's enough. I have read much, thought much, experienced much, Yet would die rather than avow my fear The Naples' liquefaction may be false, When set to happen by the palace-clock According to the clouds or dinner-time. I hear you recommend, I might at least Eliminate, decrassify my faith Since I adopt it; keeping what I must And leaving what I can—such points as this! I won't—that is, I can't throw one away. Supposing there's no truth in what I said About the need of trials to man's faith, Still, when you bid me purify the same, To such a process I discern no end, Clearing off one excrescence to see two; There's ever a next in size, now grown as big, That meets the knife—I cut and cut again! First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last But Fichte's clever cut at God himself? •Experimentalize on sacred things? I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain To stop betimes: they all get drunk alike. The first step, I am master not to take.

You'd find the cutting-process to your taste
As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned,
Nor see more danger in it, you retort.
Your taste's worth mine; but my taste proves more wise
When we consider that the steadfast hold
On the extreme end of the chain of faith
Gives all the advantage, makes the difference,
With ehe rough purblind mass we seek to rule.
We are their lords, or they are free of us
Just as we tighten or relax that hold.
So, other matters equal, we'll revert
To the first problem—which if solved my way

And thrown into the balance turns the scale— How we may lead a comfortable life, How suit our luggage to the cabin's size.

Of course you are remarking all this time How narrowly and grossly I view life, Respect the creature comforts, care to rule The masses, and regard complacently "The cabin," in our old phrase! Well, I do. I act for, talk for, live for this world now, As this world calls for action, life and talk-No prejudice to what next world may prove, Whose new laws and requirements my best pledge To observe then, is that I observe these now, Doing hereafter what I do meanwhile. Let us concede (gratuitously though) Next life relieves the soul of body, yields Pure spiritual enjoyments: well, my friend, Why lose this life in the meantime, since its use May be to make the next life more intense?

Do you know, I have often had a dream (Work it up in your next month's article) Of man's poor spirit in its progress still Losing true life for ever and a day Through ever trying to be and ever being In the evolution of successive spheres, Before its actual sphere and place of life, Half way into the next, which having reached, It shoots with corresponding foolery Half way into the next still, on and off! As when a traveller, bound from north to south, Scouts fur in Russia—what's its use in France? In France spurns flannel—where's its need in Spain? In Spain drops cloth—too cumbrous for Algiers! Linen goes next, and last the skin itself, A superfluity at Timbuctoo. When, through his journey, was the fool at ease? I'm at ease now, friend—worldly in this world I take and like its way of life; I think My brothers who administer the means Live better for my comfort—that's good too; And God, if he pronounce upon it all, Approves my service, which is better still. If He keep silence,—why for you or me Or that brute-beast pulled-up in to-day's "Times," What odds is't, save to ourselves, what life we lead?

You meet me at this issue—you declare, All special-pleading done with, truth is truth, And justifies itself by undreamed ways. You don't fear but it's better, if we doubt, To say so, acting up to our truth perceived However feebly. Do then, -act away! 'Tis there I'm on the watch for you! How one acts Is, both of us agree, our chief concern: And how you'll act is what I fain would see If, like the candid person you appear, You dare to make the most of your life's scheme As I of mine, live up to its full law Since there's no higher law that counterchecks. Put natural religion to the test You've just demolished the revealed with—quick, Down to the root of all that checks your will, All prohibition to lie, kill, and thieve Or even to be an atheistic priest! Suppose a pricking to incontinence— Philosophers deduce your chastity Or shame, from just the fact that at the first Whose embraced a woman in the plain, Threw club down, and forewent his brains beside, So stood a ready victim in the reach Of any brother-savage club in hand— Hence saw the use of going out of sight In wood or cave to prosecute his loves— I read this in a French book t'other day. Does law so analyzed coerce you much? Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where matters end, But you who reach where the first thread begins, You'll soon cut that!—which means you can, but won't Through certain instincts, blind, unreasoned-out, You dare not set aside, you can't tell why, But there they are, and so you let them rule. Then, friend, you seem as much a slave as I, A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite, Without the good the slave expects to get, Suppose he has a master after all! You own your instincts—why what else do I, Who want, am made for, and must have a God Ere I can be aught, do aught?—no mere name Want, but the true thing with what proves its truth, To wit, a relation from that thing to me, Touching from head to foot-which touch I feel. And with it take the rest, this life of ours! I live my life here; yours you dare not live,

Not as I state it, who (you please subjoin) Disfigure such a life and call it hames, While, in your mind, remains another way For simple men: knowledge and power have rights, But ignorance and weakness have rights too. There needs no crucial effort to find truth If here or there or anywhere about— We ought to turn each side, try hard and see, And if we can't, be glad we've earned at least The right, by one laborious proof the more, To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage. Men are not gods, but, properly, are brutes. Something we may see, all we cannot see— What need of lying? I say, I see all, And swear to each detail the most minute In what I think a man's face—you, mere cloud: I swear I hear him speak and see him wink, For fear, if once I drop the emphasis, Mankind may doubt if there's a cloud at all. You take the simpler life—ready to see. Willing to see—for no cloud's worth a face— And leaving quiet what no strength can move, And which, who bids you move? who has the right? I bid you; but you are God's sheep, not mine— "Pastor est tui Dominus." You find In these the pleasant pastures of this life Much you may eat without the least offence. Much you don't eat because your maw objects, Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock Open great eyes at you and even butt, And thereupon you like your friends so much You cannot please yourself, offending them-Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep, You weigh your pleasure with their butts and kicks And strike the balance. Sometimes certain tears Restrain you-real checks since you find them so-Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks: And thus you graze through life with not one lie, And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name? If so, you beat—which means—you are not I—Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with, But motioned to the velvet of the sward By those obsequious wethers' very selves. Look at me, sir; my age is double yours. At yours, I knew beforehand, so enjoyed,

What now I should be as, permit the word, I pretty well imagine your whole range And stretch of tether twenty years to come. We both have minds and bodies much alike. In truth's name, don't you want my bishopric. My daily bread, my influence and my state? You're young, I'm old, you must be old one day; Will you find then, as I do hour by hour. Women their lovers kneel to, that cut curls From your fat lap-dog's ears to grace a brooch— Dukes, that petition just to kiss your ring-With much beside you know or may conceive? Suppose we die to-night: well, here am I, Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me, While writing all the same my articles On music, poetry, the fictile vase Found at Albano, or Anacreon's Greek. But you—the highest honour in your life The thing you'll crown yourself with, all your days, Is—dining here and drinking this last glass I pour you out in sign of amity Before we part for ever. Of your power And social influence, worldly worth in short, Judge what's my estimation by the fact— I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech, Hint secresy on one of all these words! You're shrewd and know that should you publish it The world would brand the lie-my enemies first, "Who'd sneer—the bishop's an arch-hypocrite, And knave perhaps, but not so frank a fool." Whereas I should not dare for both my ears * Breathe one such syllable, smile one such smile, Before my chaplain who reflects myself— My shade's so much more potent than your flesh. What's your reward, self-abnegating friend? Stood you confessed of those exceptional And privileged great natures that dwarf mine-A zealot with a mad ideal in reach, A poet just about to print his ode, A statesman with a scheme to stop this war, An artist whose religion is his art, I should have nothing to object! such men Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them, Their drugget's worth my purple, they beat me. But you,-you're just as little those as I-You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age, Write statedly for Blackwood's Magazine, Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul

Unseized by the Germans yet—which view you'll print— Meantime the best you have to show being still That lively lightsome article we took Almost for the true Dickens,—what's the name? "The Slum and Cellar—or Whitechapel life Limned after dark!" it made me laugh, I know, And pleased a month and brought you in ten pounds. -Success I recognise and compliment, And therefore give you, if you please, three words (The card and pencil-scratch is quite enough) Which whether here, in Dublin, or New York, Will get you, prompt as at my eyebrow's wink, Such terms as never you aspired to get In all our own reviews and some not ours. Go write your lively sketches—be the first "Blougram, or The Eccentric Confidence"-Or better simply say, "The Outward-bound." Why, men as soon would throw it in my teeth As copy and quote the infamy chalked broad About me on the church-door opposite. You will not wait for that experience though I fancy, howsoever you decide, To discontinue—not detesting, not Defaming, but at least—despising me!

Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour Sylvester Blougram, styled in partibus Episcopus, nec non—(the deuce knows what It's changed to by our novel hierarchy) With Gigadibs the literary man, Who played with spoons, explored his plate's design, And ranged the olive stones about its edge, While the great bishop rolled him out his mind.

For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke. The other portion, as he shaped it thus For argumentatory purposes,
He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.
Some arbitrary accidental thoughts
That crossed his mind, amusing because new,
He chose to represent as fixtures there,
Invariable convictions (such they seemed Beside his interlocutor's loose cards
Flung daily down, and not the same way twice)
While certain hell-deep instincts, man's weak tongue Is never bold to utter in their truth
Because styled hell-deep ('tis an old mistake
To place hell at the bottom of the earth)

He ignored these,—not having in readiness Their nomenclature and philosophy:
He said true things, but called them by wrong names.
"On the whole," he thought, "I justify myself
On every point where cavillers like this
Oppugn my life: he tries one kind of fence—
I close—he's worsted, that's enough for him;
He's on the ground! if the ground should break away
I take my stand on, there's a firmer yet
Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.
His ground was over mine and broke the first.
So let him sit with me this many a year!"

He did not sit five minutes. Just a week Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence. (Something had struck him in the "Outward-bound" Another way than Blougram's purpose was) And having bought, not cabin-furniture But settler's-implements (enough for three) And started for Australia—there, I hope, By this time he has tested his first plough And studied his last chapter of St. John.

MEMORABILIA.

Ι.

An, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you?
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems, and new!

и.

But you were living before that,
And you are living after,
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter

III.

I crossed a moor with a name of its own
And a use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about—

IV

For there I picked up on the heather And there I put inside my breast A moulted feather, an eagle-feather— Well, I forget the rest.

ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

But do not let us quarrel any more, No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once: Sit down and all shall happen as you wish. You turn your face, but does it bring your heart? I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear, Treat his own subject after his own way, Fix his own time, accept too his own price, And shut the money into this small hand When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly? Oh, I'll content him, -but to-morrow, Love! I often am much wearier than you think, This evening more than usual, and it seems As if—forgive now—should you let me sit Here by the window with your hand in mine And look a half hour forth on Fiesole, Both of one mind, as married people use, Quietly, quietly, the evening through, I might get up to-morrow to my work Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try. To-morrow how you shall be glad for this! Your soft hand is a woman of itself, And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside. Don't count the time lost, either; you must serve For each of the five pictures we require—

It saves a model. So! keep looking so-My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds! -How could you ever prick those perfect ears, Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet-My face, my moon, my everybody's moon, Which everybody looks on and calls his, And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn, While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less! You smile? why, there's my picture ready made. There's what we painters call our harmony! A common greyness silvers everything,— All in a twilight, you and I alike -You, at the point of your first pride in me (That's gone you know), but I, at every point; My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole. There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top; That length of convent-wall across the way Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside; The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease And autumn grows, autumn in everything. Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape As if I saw alike my work and self And all that I was born to be and do, A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand. How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead! So free we seem, so fettered fast we are: I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie! This chamber for example—turn your head— All that's behind us! you don't understand Nor care to understand about my art, , But you can hear at least when people speak ; And that cartoon, the second from the door —It is the thing, Love! so such things should be— Behold Madonna, I am bold to say. I can do with my pencil what I know, What I see, what at bottom of my heart I wish for, if I ever wish so deep-Do easily, too—when I say perfectly I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge Who listened to the Legate's talk last week, And just as much they used to say in France. At any rate 'tis easy, all of it, No sketches first, no studies, that's long past— I do what many dream of all their lives -Dream? strive to do, and agonies to do, And fail in doing. I could count twenty such On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,

Who strive—you don't know how the others strive To paint a little thing like that you smeared Carelessly passing with your robes affoat, Yet do much less, so much less, some one says, (I know his name, no matter) so much less! Well, less is more, Lucrezia! I am judged. There burns a truer light of God in them, In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain, Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine. Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know, Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me, Enter and take their place there sure enough, Though they come back and cannot tell the world. My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here. The sudden blood of these men! at a word— Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too. I, painting from myself and to myself, Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame Or their praise either. Somebody remarks Morello's outline there is wrongly traced, His hue mistaken—what of that? or else, Rightly traced and well ordered—what of that? Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp. Or what's a Heaven for? all is silver-grey Placid and perfect with my art—the worse! I know both what I want and what might gain— And yet how profitless to know, to sigh "Had I been two, another and myself, Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt. Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth The Urbinate who died five years ago. ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me). Well, I can fancy how he did it all, Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see, Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish him, Above and through his art—for it gives way; That arm is wrongly put—and there again— A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines, Its body, so to speak! its soul is right, He means right—that, a child may understand. Still, what an arm! and I could alter it. But all the play, the insight and the stretch— Out of me! out of me! And wherefore out? Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul, We might have risen to Rafael, I and you. Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think-More than I merit, yes, by many times.

But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow, And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth, And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare— Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind! Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged "God and the glory! never care for gain. The present by the future, what is that? Live for fame, side by side with Angelo-Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three!" I might have done it for you. So it seems— Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules. Beside, incentives come from the soul's self; The rest avail not. Why do I need you? What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo? In this world, who can do a thing, will not— And who would do it, cannot, I perceive: Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power— And thus we half-men struggle. At the end, God, I conclude, compensates, punishes. 'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict, That I am something underrated here, Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth. I dared not, do you know, leave home all day, For fear of chancing on the Paris lords. The best is when they pass and look aside; But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all. Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time, And that long festal year at Fontainebleau! I surely then could sometimes leave the ground, Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear, In that humane great monarch's golden look,— One finger in his beard or twisted curl Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile, One arm about my shoulder, round my neck, The jingle of his gold chain in my ear, You painting proudly with his breath on me, All his court round him, seeing with his eyes, Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,— And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond, This in the back-ground, waiting on my work, To crown the issue with a last reward! A good time, was it not, my kingly days? And had you not grown restless—but I know— 'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said; Too live the life grew, golden and not grey— And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt

Out of the grange whose four walls make his world. How could it end in any other way? You called me, and I came home to your heart. The triumph was to have ended there—then if I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost? Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold, You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine! "Rafael did this, Andrea painted that-The Roman's is the better when you pray, But still the other's Virgin was his wife -" Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows My better fortune, I resolve to think. For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives, Said one day Angelo, his very self, To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . . (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see, Too lifted up in heart because of it) "Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how, Who, were he set to plan and execute As you are pricked on by your popes and kings, Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours! " To Rafael's !—And indeed the arm is wrong. I hardly dare-yet, only you to see, Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go! Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out! Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth, (What he? why, who but Michael Angelo? Do you forget already words like those?) If really there was such a chance, so lost, Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased. Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed! This hour has been an hour! Another smile? If you would sit thus by me every night I should work better, do you comprehend? I mean that I should earn more, give you more. See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star; Morello's gone, the watch-lights shew the wall, The cue-owls speak the name we call them by. Come from the window, Love,—come in; at last, Inside the melancholy little house We built to be so gay with. God is just. King Francis may forgive me. Oft at nights When I look up from painting, eyes tired out, The walls become illumined, brick from brick Distinct, instead of mortar fierce bright gold,

That gold of his I did cement them with! Let us but love each other. Must you go? That Cousin here again? he waits outside? Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans! More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that? Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend? While hand and eye and something of a heart Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth? I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit The grey remainder of the evening out, Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly How I could paint were I but back in France. One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face, Not your's this time! I want you at my side To hear them—that is, Michael Angelo— Judge all I do and tell you of its worth. Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend. I take the subjects for his corridor, Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there, And throw him in another thing or two If he demurs; the whole should prove enough To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside. What's better and what's all I care about, Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff. Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he, The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night. I regret little, I would change still less. Since there my past life lies, why alter it? The very wrong to Francis! it is true I took his coin, was tempted and complied, And built this house and sinned, and all is said. My father and my mother died of want. Well, had I riches of my own? you see How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot. They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died: And I have laboured somewhat in my time And not been paid profusely. Some good son Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try! No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night. This must suffice me here. What would one have? In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance-Four great walls in the New Jerusalem Meted on each side by the angel's reed, For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me To cover—the three first without a wife,

While I have mine! So—still they overcome Because there's still Lucrezia, as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

BEFORE.

T

LET them fight it out, friend! things have gone too far. God must judge the couple! leave them as they are —Whichever one's the guiltless, to his glory, And whichever one the guilt's with, to my story.

II.

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough, Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now, Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment, Heaven with snaky Hell, in torture and entoilment?

TTT

Which of them's the culprit, how must be conceive God's the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve! 'Tis but decent to profess oneself beneath her. Still, one must not be too much in earnest either.

IV.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes, Then go live his life out! life will try his nerves, When the sky which noticed all, makes no disclosure, And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

v.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose, Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes. For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden, With the sly mute thing beside there for a warden.

VI.

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant to his side, A leer and lie in every eye on its obsequious hide? When will come an end of all the mock obeisance, And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?

VII

So much for the culprit. Who's the martyred man? Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can. He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven, Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven.

VIII.

All or nothing, stake it! trusts he God or no? Thus far and no farther? farther? be it so. Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses, Sage provisos, sub-intents, and saving-clauses.

IX.

Ah, "forgive" you bid him? While God's champion lives, Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why he forgives. But you must not end my friend ere you begin him; Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him.

x.

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of all, Dare to say "I did wrong," rising in his fall?
No?—Let go, then—both the fighters to their places—While I count three, step you back as many paces.

AFTER.

Take the cloak from his face, and at first Let the corpse do its worst.

How he lies in his rights of a man!
Death has done all death can.
And absorbed in the new life he leads,
He recks not, he heeds

Nor his wrong nor my vengeance—both strike On his senses wike, And are lost in the solemn and strange Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold—
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne.

I stand here now, he lies in his place— Cover the face.

IN THREE DAYS.

I.

So, I shall see her in three days
And just one night, but nights are short,
Then two long hours, and that is morn.
See how I come, unchanged, unworn—
Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—
Only a touch and we combine!

II.

Too long, this time of year, the days! But nights—at least the nights are short. As night shows where her one moon is, A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss, So, life's night gives my lady birth And my eyes hold her! what is worth The rest of heaven, the rest of earth?

III.

O loaded curls, release your store Of warmth and scent as once before The tingling hair did, lights and darks Out-breaking into fairy sparks When under curl and curl I pried After the warmth and scent inside Thro' lights and darks how manifold—The dark inspired, the light controlled! As early Art embrowned the gold.

IV.

What great fear—should one say, "Three days
That change the world, might change as well
Your fortune; and if joy delays,
Be happy that no worse befell."
What small fear—if another says,
"Three days and one short night beside
May throw no shadow on your ways;
But years must teem with change untried,
With chance not easily defied, '
With an end somewhere undescried."
No fear!—or if a fear be born
This minute, it dies out in scorn.
Fear? I shall see her in three days
And one night, now the nights are short,
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR.

T

NEVER any more
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.
Once his love grown chill,
Mine may strive—
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

II.

Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?

Strange! that very way
Love begun.
I as little understand
Love's decay.

III.

When I sewed or drew,
I recall
How he looked as if I sang,
—Sweetly too.
If I spoke a word,
First of all
Up his cheek the color sprang,
Then he heard.

ıv.

Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed the air I breathed,
Satisfied!
I, too, at love's brim
Touched the sweet:
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him.

v.

"Speak, I love thee best!"
He exclaimed.
"Let thy love my own foretell,—"
I confessed:
"Clasp my heart on thine
Now unblamed,
Since upon thy soul as well
Hangeth mine!"

VI.

Was it wrong to own,
Being truth?
Why should all the giving prove
His alone?
I had wealth and ease,
Beauty, youth—
Since my lover gave me love
I gave these.

VII.

That was all I meant,

—To be just,

And the passion I had raised
To content.

Since he chose to change
Gold for dust,

If I gave him what he praised
Was it strange?

VIII.

Would he loved me yet,
On and on,
While I found some way undreamed
—Paid my debt!
Gave more life and more,
Till, all gone,
He should smile, "She never seemed
Mine before.

IX.

"What—she felt the while,
Must I think?
Love's so different with us men,"
He should smile.
"Dying for my sake—
White and pink!
Can't we touch these bubbles then
But they break?"

x.

Dear, the pang is brief.
Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure. How perplext
Grows belief!
Well, this cold clay clod
Was man's heart.
Crumble it—and what comes next?
Is it God?

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE.

ı.

The morn when first it thunders in March,
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say.
As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
Of the villa-gate, this warm March day.
No flash snapt, no dumb thunder rolled
In the valley beneath, where, white and wide,
Washed by the morning's water-gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

II.

River and bridge and street and square
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
Through the live translucent bath of air,
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
And of all I saw and of all I praised,
The most to praise and the best to see,
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised:
But why did it more than startle me?

III.

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
Could you play me false who loved you so?
Some slights if a certain heart endures
It feels, I would have your fellows know!
'Faith—I perceive not why I should care
To break a silence that suits them best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

IV.

On the arch where olives overhead Print the blue sky with twig and leaf, (That sharp-curled leaf they never shed) 'Twixt the aloes I used to lean in chief, And mark through the winter afternoons, By a gift God grants me now and then, In the mild decline of those suns like moons, Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

V.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
For pleasure or profit, her men alive—
My business was hardly with them, I trow,
But with empty cells of the human hive;
—With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch—
Its face, set full for the sun to shave

VI.

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains!
One, wishful each scrap should clutch its brick,
Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
—A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

VII.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!

They are safe in heaven with their backs to it,
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
Round the works of, you of the little wit!
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope
Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope?

'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

VIII.

Much they reck of your praise and you!

But the wronged great souls—can they be quit
Of a world where all their work is to do,
Where you style them, you of the little wit,
Old Master this and Early the other,
Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows,
That a younger succeeds to an elder brother,
Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

IX.

And here where your praise would yield returns
And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
What, not a word for Stefano there
—Of brow once prominent and starry,
Called Nature's ape and the world's despair
For his peerless painting (see Vasari)?

x.

There he stands now. Study, my friends,
What a man's work comes to! so he plans it,
Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
For the toiling and moiling, and there's its transit!
Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbour!
"Tis looking downward makes one dizzy.

XI.

If you knew their work you would deal your dole.

May I take upon me to instruct you?

When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
Thus much had the world to boast in fructu—

The truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
Which the actual generations garble,

Was re-uttered,—and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
And Limbs (Soul informs) were made new in marble.

XII

So you saw yourself as you wished you were,
As you might have been, as you cannot be;
And bringing your own shortcomings there,
You grew content in your poor degree
With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
And your little date, by their forms that stay.

XIII.

You would fain be kinglier, say than I am?
Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
You'd fain be a model? the Son of Priam
Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.

You're wroth—can you slay your snake like Apollo? You're grieved—still Niobe's the grander! You live—there's the Racers' frieze to follow— You die—there's the dying Alexander.

XIV.

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,
Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
You learn—to submit is the worsted's duty.
—When I say "you" 'tis the common soul,
The collective, I mean—the race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
And grow here according to God's own plan.

XV.

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start—What if we so small
Are greater, ay, greater the while than they!
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.

XVI.

To-day's brief passion limits their range,
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.

They are perfect—how else? they shall never change:
We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us—we are rough-hewn, no-wise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

XVII.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
The better! what's come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven.
Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
Thyself shall afford the example, Giotto!
Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) "O!"
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

XVIII.

Is it true, we are now, and shall be hereafter,
And what—is depending on life's one minute?
Hails heavenly cheef or infernal laughter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
And Man, this step within his endeavour,
His face, have no more play and action
Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
Or grief, an eternal petrifaction!

XIX.

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?"—
Replied "Become now self-acquainters,
And paint man, man,—whatever the issue!
Make the hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters.
So bring the invisible full into play,
Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?"

XX.

Give these, I say, full honour and glory
For daring so much, before they well did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old, 'tis no idle quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution
Which if on the earth we intend to acknowledge
Honour them now—(ends my allocution)
Nor confer our degree when the folks leave college.

XXI.

There's a fancy some lean to and others hate—
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins—
Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

XXII

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And through earth and its noise, what is heaven's serene,
When its faith in the same has stood the test—

Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod, The uses of labour are surely done. There remaineth a rest for the people of God, And I have had troubles enough for one.

XXIII.

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy,
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan;
My painter—who but Cimabue?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
So now to my special grievance—heigh-ho!

XXIV.

Their ghosts now stand, as I said before,
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er
—No getting again what the church has grasped!
The works on the wall must take their chance,
"Works never conceded to England's thick clime!
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV.

When they go at length, with such a shaking
Of heads o'er the old delusions, sadly
Each master his way through the black streets taking,
Where many a lost work breathes though badly—
Why don't they bethink them of who has merited?
Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
Such doom, that a captive's to be out-ferreted?
Why do they never remember me?

XXVI.

Not that I expect the great Bigordi
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose;
Nor wronged Lippino—and not a word I
Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's.
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your intonaco—
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye?
No churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

XXVII.

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman?
No Virgin by him, the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera crumbly—
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

XXVIII.

Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret,
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
You bald, saturnine, poll-clawed parrot?)
No poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the donor?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding does you but little honour.

XXIX.

They pass: for them the panels may thrill,
The tempera grow alive and tinglish—
Rot or are left to the mercies still
Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English!
Seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
Who sell it to some one calm as Zeno
At naked Art, and in ecstacies
Before some clay-cold, vile Carlino!

XXX.

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,
Have you allowed, as the town-tongues babble it
Never! it shall not be counted true—
That a certain precious little tablet
Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover,—
Buried so long in oblivion's womb,
Was left for another than I to discover,—
Turns up at last, and to whom?—to whom?

XXXI.

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito, (Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
Stood on the altar-steps, patient and weary too!
Nay, I shall have it yet, detur amanti! My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a platitude)
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye!
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

XXXII.

When the hour is ripe, and a certain dotard
Pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
To the worse side of the Mont St. Gothard,
Have, to begin by way of rejoicing,
None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
No civic guards, all plumes and lacquer,
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII.

We'll shoot this time better game and bag'em hot—No display at the stone of Dante,
But a kind of Witan-agemot
("Casa Guidi," quod videas ante)
To ponder Freedom restored to Florence,
How Art may return that departed with her.
Go, hated house, go each trace of the Loraine's!
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither.

XXXIV.

How we shall prologuise, how we shall perorate,
Say fit things upon art and history—
• Set truth at blood-heat and the false at a zero rate,
Make of the want of the age no mystery!
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show, monarchy its uncouth cub licks
Out of the bear's shape to the chimæra's—
Pure Art's birth being still the republic's!

XXXV.

Then one shall propose (in a speech, curt Tuscan, Sober, expurgate, spare of an "issimo,")
Ending our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
Turning the Bell-tower's altaltissimo.
And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Soars up in gold its full fifty braccia,
Completing Florence, as Florence. Italy.

XXXVI.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire
Like the golden hope of the world unbaffled
Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire—
As, "God and the People" plain for its motto,
Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky?
Foreseeing the day that vindicates Giotto
And Florence together, the first am I!

IN A BALCONY.

FIRST PART.

CONSTANCE and NORBERT.

NORBERT.

Now.

CONSTANCE.

Not now.

NORBERT.

Give me them again, those hands-Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs! Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through. You cruellest, you dearest in the world, Let me! the Queen must grant whate'er I ask --How can I gain you and not ask the Queen? There she stays waiting for me, here stand you Some time or other this was to be asked, Now is the one time—what I ask, I gain—Let me ask now, Love!

CONSTANCE.

Do, and ruin us.

NORBERT

Let it be now, Love! All my soul breaks forth. How I do love you! give my love its way! A man can have but one life and one death, One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate—Grant me my heaven now. Let me know you mine, Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow, Hold you and have you, and then die away If God please, with completion in my soul.

CONSTANCE.

I am not yours then? how content this man? I am not his, who change into himself, Have passed into his heart and beat its beats, Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair. Give all that was of me away to him So well, that now, my spirit turned his own, Takes part with him against the woman here, Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw As caring that the world be cognisant How he loves her and how she worships him. You have this woman, not as yet that world. Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me By saving what I cease to care about, The courtly name and pride of circumstance— The name you'll pick up and be cumbered with Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more; Just that the world may slip from under you— Just that the world may cry "So much for him-The man predestined to the heap of crowns! There goes his chance of winning one, at least."

NORBERT.

The world!

CONSTANCE.

You love it. Love me quite as well, And see if I shall pray for this in vain! Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks?

NORBERT.

You pray for—what, in vain?

CONSTANCE.

Oh my heart's heart, How I do love you, Norbert!—that is right! But listen, or I take my hands away. You say, "let it be now"—you would go now And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us, You love me—so you do, thank God!

NORBERT.

Thank God!

CONSTANCE.

Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your love, And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her My hand. Now take this rose and look at it. Listening to me. You are the minister, The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause. To-night completes your wonderful year's-work (This palace-feast is held to celebrate) Made memorable by her life's success, That junction of two crowns on her sole head Her house had only dreamed of anciently. That this mere dream is grown a stable truth To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise? Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved What turned the many heads and broke the hearts? You are the fate—your minute's in the heaven. Next comes the Queen's turn. Name your own reward! With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come. Put out an arm and touch and take the sun And fix it ever full-faced on your earth, Possess yourself supremely of her life, You choose the single thing she will not grant— The very declaration of which choice Will turn the scale and neutralise your work. At best she will forgive you, if she can. You think I'll let you choose—her cousin's hand?

NORBERT.

Wait. First, do you retain your old belief The Queen is generous,—nay, is just?

CONSTANCE.

There, there!

So men make women leve them, while they know No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here, You that are just and generous beside, Make it your own case. For example now, I'll say—I let you kiss me and hold my hands— Why? do you know why? I'll instruct you, then-The kiss, because you have a name at court, This hand and this, that you may shut in each A jewel, if you please to pick up such. That's horrible! Apply it to the Queen— Suppose, I am the Queen to whom you speak. "I was a nameless man: you needed me: Why did I proffer you my aid? there stood A certain pretty Cousin at your side. Why did I make such common cause with you? Access to her had not been easy else. You give my labours here abundant praise: 'Faith, labour, while she overlooked, grew play. How shall your gratitude discharge itself? Give me her hand!"

NORBERT.

And still I urge the same. Is the Queen just? just—generous or no!

CONSTANCE.

Yes, just. You love a rose—no harm in that— But was it for the rose's sake or mine You put it in your bosom? mine, you said— Then mine you still must say or else be false. You told the Queen you served her for herself: If so, to serve her was to serve yourself! She thinks, for all your unbelieving face! I know her. In the hall, six steps from us, One sees the twenty pictures -there's a life Better than life—and yet no life at all; Conceive her born in such a magic dome, Pictures all round her! why, she sees the world, Can recognise its given things and facts, The fight of giants or the feast of gods, Sages in senate, beauties at the bath, Chaces and battles, the whole earth's display, Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and fruit-And who shall question that she knows them all In better semblance than the things outside? Yet bring into the silent gallery нн2

Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood, Some lion, with the painted lion there-You think she'll understand composedly? -Say, "that's his fellow in the hunting-piece Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred times?" Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth, Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies, Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal. The real exists for us outside, not her--How should it, with that life in these four walls, That father and that mother, first to last No father and no mother—friends, a heap, Lovers, no lack-- a husband in due time, And everyone of them alike a lie! Things painted by a Rubens out of nought Into what kindness, friendship, love should be; All better, all more grandiose than life, Only no life; mere cloth and surface-paint You feel while you admire. How should she feel? And now that she has stood thus fifty years The sole spectator in that gallery, You think to bring this warm real struggling love In to her of a sudden, and suppose She'll keep her state untroubled? Here's the truth— She'll apprehend its value at a glance. Prefer it to the pictured loyalty! You only have to say "so men are made, For this they act, the thing has many names But this the right one—and now, Queen, be just!" And life slips back—you lose her at the word— You do not even for amends gain me. He will not understand! oh, Norbert, Norbert. Do you not understand?

NORBERT.

The Queen's the Queen, I am myself—no picture, but alive
In every nerve and every muscle, here
At the palace-window or in the people's street,
As she in the gallery where the pictures glow.
The good of life is precious to us both.
She cannot love—what do I want with rule?
When first I saw your face a year ago
I knew my life's good—my soul heard one voice
"The woman yonder, there's no use of life
But just to obtain her! heap earth's woes in one
And bear them—make a pile of all earth's joys

And spurn them, as they help or help not here; Only, obtain her!"—How was it to be? I found she was the cousin of the Queen; I must then serve the Queen to get to her-No other way. Suppose there had been one, And I by saying prayers to some white star With promise of my body and my soul Might gain you,—should I pray the star or no? Instead, there was the Queen to serve! I served, And did what other servants failed to do. Neither she sought nor I declared my end. Her good is hers, my recompense be mine, And let me name you as that recompense. She dreamed that such a thing could never be? She thinks there was some cause— Let her wake now. The love of power, of fame, pure loyalty? —Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives Chasing such shades. Then I've a fancy too. I worked because I want you with my soul— I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now.

CONSTANCE.

Had I not loved you from the very first, Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus So wickedly, so wildly, and so well, You might be thus impatient. What's conceived Of us without here, by the folks within? Where are you now? immersed in cares of state— Where am I now?—intent on festal robes— We two, embracing under death's spread hand! • What was this thought for, what this scruple of years Which broke the council up, to bring about One minute's meeting in the corridor? And then the sudden sleights, long secresies, The plots inscrutable, deep telegraphs, Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look, "Does she know? does she not know? saved or lost?" A year of this compression's ecstasy All goes for nothing? you would give this up For the old way, the open way, the world's, His way who beats, and his who sells his wife? What tempts you? their notorious happiness, That you're ashamed of ours? The best you'll get Will be, the Queen grants all that you require, Concedes the cousin, and gets rid of you And her at once, and gives us ample leave To live as our five hundred happy friends.

The world will show us with officious hand Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel, When we so oft have stolen across her traps! Get the world's warrant, ring the falcon's foot, And make it duty to be bold and swift, When long ago 'twas nature. Have it so! He never hawked by rights till flung from fist? Oh, the man's thought!—no woman's such actool.

NORBERT.

Yes, the man's thought and my thought, which is more One made to love you, let the world take note. Have I done worthy work? be love's the praise, Though hampered by restrictions, barred against By set forms, blinded by forced secresies. Set free my love, and see what love will do Shown in my life—what work will spring from that! The world is used to have its business done On other grounds, find great effects produced For power's sake, fame's sake, motives you have named. So good. But let my low ground shame their high. Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true! And love's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest! I choose to have you stamped all over me, Your name upon my forehead and my breast, You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's edge, That men may see, all over, you in me-That pale loves may die out of their pretence In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall off— Permit this, Constance! Love has been so long Subdued in me, eating me through and through, That now it's all of me and must have way. Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues, Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays, That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow, Trembling at last to its assured result-Then think of this revulsion. Life, after death, (it is no less than life After such long unlovely labouring days) And liberate to beauty life's great need Of the beautiful, which, while it prompted work, Supprest itself erewhile. This eve's the time— This eve intense with you first trembling star We seem to pant and reach; scarce aught between The earth that rises and the heaven that bends— All nature self-abandoned—every tree Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts

And fixed so, every flower and every weed, No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat: All under God, each measured by itself! These statues round us, each abrupt, distinct, The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed, The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre, The Nymph to her fawn, the Silence to her rose, And God's approval on his universe! Let us do so—aspire to live as these In harmony with truth, ourselves being true. Take the first way, and let the second come. My first is to possess myself of you; The music sets the march-step—forward then! And there's the Queen, I go to claim you of, The world to witness, wonder and applaud. Our flower of life breaks open. No delay!

CONSTANCE.

And so shall we be ruined, both of us. Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone— You do not know her, were not born to it, To feel what she can see or cannot see. Love, she is generous,—ay, despite your smile, Generous as you are. For, in that thin frame Pain-twisted, punctured through and through with cares, There lived a lavish soul until it starved Debarred all healthy food. Look to the soul— Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin (The true man's way) on justice and your rights, Exactions and acquittance of the past. Begin so—see what justice she will deal! We women hate a debt as men a gift. Suppose her some poor keeper of a school Whose business is to sit thro' summer-months And dole out children's leave to go and play, Herself superior to such lightness—she In the arm-chair's state and padagogic pomp, To the life, the laughter, sun and youth outside— We wonder such an one looks black on us? I do not bid you wake her tenderness, -That were vain truly—none is left to wake— But, let her think her justice is engaged To take the shape of tenderness, and mark If she'll not coldly do its warmest deed! Does she love me. I ask you? not a whit. Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged To help a kinswoman, she took me up-

Did more on that bare ground than other loves Would do on greater argument. For me, I have no equivalent of that cold kind To pay her with; my love alone to give If I give anything. I give her love. I feel I ought to help her, and I will. So for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice That women hate a debt as men a gift. If I were you, I could obtain this grace-Would lay the whole I did to love's account, Nor yet be very false as courtiers go-Declare that my success was recompense; It would be so, in fact: what were it else? And then, once loosed her generosity As you will mark it—then,—were I but you To turn it, let it seem to move itself, And make it give the thing I really take, Accepting so, in the poor cousin's hand, All value as the next thing to the queen-Since none loves her directly, none dares that! A shadow of a thing, a name's mere echo Suffices those who miss the name and thing: You pick up just a ribbon she has worn To keep in proof how near her breath you came. Say I'm so near I seem a piece of her-Ask for me that way—(oh, you understand) And find the same gift yielded with a grace, Which if you make the least show to extort -You'll see! and when you have ruined both of us. Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude!

NORBERT.

Then, if I turn it that way, you consent? 'Tis not my way; I have more hope in truth, Still if you won't have truth—why, this indeed, Is scarcely false, I'll so express the sense. Will you remain here?

CONSTANCE.

O best heart of mine,
How I have loved you! then, you take my way?
Are mine as you have been her minister,
Work out my thought, give it effect for me,
Paint plain my poor conceit and make it serve?
I owe that withered woman everything—
Life, fortune, you, remember! Take my part—

Help me to pay her! *Stand upon your rights? You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on you? Your rights are mine—you have no rights but mine.

NORBERT.

Remain here. How you know me!

CONSTANCE.

Ah, but still ---

[He breaks from her: she remains. Dance-music from within.

SECOND PART.

Enter the QUEEN.

QUEEN.

Constance!—She is here as he said. Speak! quick! Is it so? is it true—or false? One word!

CONSTANCE.

True.

QUEEN.

Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee!

CONSTANCE.

Madam!

QUEEN.

I love you, Constance, from my soul. Now say once more, with any words you will, 'Tis true—all true—as true as that I speak. CONSTANCE.

Why should you doubt it?

QUEEN.

Ah, why doubt? why doubt Dear, make me see it. Do you see it so?

None see themselves—another sees them best.

You say "why doubt it?"—you see him and me.

It is because the Mother has such grace

That if we had but faith—wherein we fail—

Whate'er we yearn for would be granted us;

Howbeit we let our whims prescribe despair.

Our very fancies thwart and cramp our will,

And so accepting life, abjure ourselves!

Constance, I had abjured the hope of love

And of being loved, as truly as yon palm

The hope of seeing Egypt from that turf.

CONSTANCE.

Heaven!

QUEEN.

But it was so, Constance, it was so.
Men say—or do men say it? fancies say—
"Stop here, your life is set, you are grown old.
Too late—no love for you, too late for love—
Leave love to girls. Be queen—let Constance love!'
One takes the hint—half meets it like a child,
Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.
"Oh, love, true, never think of love again!
I am a queen—I rule, not love, indeed."
So it goes on; so a face grows like this,
Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,
Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank God!

CONSTANCE.

I cannot undertand

QUEEN.

The happier you! Constance, I know not how it is with men. For women, (I am a woman now like you) There is no good of life but love—but love!
What else looks good, is some shade flung from love—Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,
Never you cheat yourself one instant. Love,
Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!
O Constance, how I love you!

CONSTANCE.

I love you.

QUEEN.

I do believe that all is come through you.
I took you to my heart to keep it warm
When the last chance of love seemed dead in me;
I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered heart.
Oh, I am very old now, am I not?
Not so! it is true, and it shall be true!

CONSTANCE.

Tell it me! let me judge if true or false.

QUEEN.

Ah, but I fear you—you will look at me And say "she's old, she's grown unlovely quite Who ne'er was beauteous! men want beauty still." Well, so I feared—the curse! so I felt sure.

CONSTANCE.

Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say?

QUEEN.

Constance, he came, the coming was not strange—Do not I stand and see men come and go? I turned a half-look from my pedestal Where I grow marble—"one young man the more! He will love some one,—that is nought to me—What would he with my marble stateliness?" Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore; The man more gracious, youthful, like a god, And I still older, with less flesh to change—We two those dear extremes that long to touch.

It seemed still harder when he first began Absorbed to labour at the state-affairs The old way for the old end, interest. Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands, Professing they've no care but for your cause, Thought but to help you, love but for yourself, And you the marble statue all the time They praise and point at as preferred to life, Yet leave for the first breathing woman's cheek, First dancer's, gypsy's, or street baladine's! Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech Stiffed for fear it should alarm my ear, Their gait subdued lest step should startle me, Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect, Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve, While not a man of these broke rank and spoke, Or wrote me a vulgar letter all of love. Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand. There have been moments, if the sentinel Lowering his halbert to salute the queen, Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees, I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.

CONSTANCE.

Who could have comprehended!

QUEEN.

Ay, who—who? Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did. Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps It comes too late—would you but tell the truth.

CONSTANCE.

I wait to tell it.

QUEEN.

Well, you see, he came,
Outfaced the others, did a work this year
Exceeds in value all was ever done
You know—it is not I who say it—all
Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)
I grew aware not only of what he did,
But why so wondrously. Oh, never work
Like his was done for work's ignoble sake—

It must have finer aims to spur it on!
I felt, I saw he loved—loved somebody.
And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,
I did believe this while 'twas you he loved.

CONSTANCE.

Me, madam?

QUEEN.

It did seem to me your face Met him where'er he looked: and whom but you Was such a man to love? it seemed to me You saw he loved you, and approved the love, And that you both were in intelligence. You could not loiter in the garden, step Into this balcony, but I straight was stung And forced to understand. It seemed so true, So right, so beautiful, so like you both That all this work should have been done by him Not for the vulgar hope of recompense, But that at last—suppose some night like this— Borne on to claim his due reward of me He might say, "Give her hand and pay me so." And I (O Constance, you shall love me now) I thought, surmounting all the bitterness, -"And he shall have it. I will make her blest. . My flower of youth, my woman's self that was, My happiest woman's self that might have been! These two shall have their joy and leave me here.' Yes-yes-

CONSTANCE.

Thanks!

QUEEN.

And the word was on my lip. When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear A mere calm statement of his just desire In payment of his labour. When, O Heaven, How can I tell you? cloud was on my eyes And thunder in my ears at that first word Which told 'twas love of me, of me, did all—He loved me—from the first step to the last, Loved me!

CONSTANCE!

You did not hear . . . you thought he spoke Of love? what if you should mistake?

QUEEN

No, no -No mistake! Ha, there shall be no mistake! He had not dared to hint the love he felt— You were my reflex—how I understood! He said you were the ribbon I had worn, He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes, And love, love was the end of every phrase. Love is begun—this much is come to pass, The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours I will learn, I will place my life on you, But teach me how to keep what I have won. Am I so old? this hair was early grey; But joy ere now has brought hair brown again, And joy will bring the cheek's red back, I feel. I could sing once too; that was in my youth. Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes Beautiful—for the last French painter did! I know they flatter somewhat; you are frank— I trust you. How I loved you from the first! Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out And set her by their side to take the eye: I must have felt that good would come from you. I am not generous-like him-like you! But he is not your lover after all— It was not you he looked at. Saw you him? You have not been mistaking words or looks? He said you were the reflex of myself— And yet he is not such a paragon To you, to younger women who may choose Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth! You know you never named his name to me-You know, I cannot give him up—ah God, Not up now, even to you!

CONSTANCE.

Then calm yourself.

QUEEN.

See, I am old—look here, you happy girl, I will not play the fool, deceive myself;

'Tis all gone—put your cheek beside my cheek— Ah, what a contrast does the moon behold! But then I set my life upon one chance, The last chance and the best—am I not left, My soul, myself? All women love great men If young or old—it is in all the tales— Young beauties love old poets who can love-Why should not he the poems in my soul, The love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice, The constancy? I throw them at his feet. Who cares to see the fountain's very shape And whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's That pours the foam, makes rainbows all around? You could not praise indeed the empty conch; But I'll pour floods of love and hide myself. How I will love him! cannot men love love? Who was a queen and loved a poet once Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women can do that! Well, but men too! at least, they tell you so. They love so many women in their youth, And even in age they all love whom they please; And yet the best of them confide to friends That 'tis not beauty makes the lasting love— They spend a day with such and tire the next; They like soul,—well then, they like phantasy, Novelty even. Let us confess the truth Horrible though it be—that prejudice, Prescription . . . Curses! they will love a queen. They will—they do. And will not, does not—he?

CONSTANCE.

How can he? You are wedded—'tis a name We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains, His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled As you believe and I incline to think, Aspire to be your favourite, shame and all?

QUEEN.

Hear her! there, there now—could she love like me? What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth and grace? See all it does or could do! so, youth loves! Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never do What I will—you, it was not born in! I Will drive these difficulties far and fast As yonder mists curdling before the moon. I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve

My youth from its enforced calamity, Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his, His own in the eyes alike of God and man.

CONSTANCE.

You will do-dare do-Pause on what you say!

QUEEN.

Hear her! I thank you, Sweet, for that surprise. You have the fair face: for the soul, see mine! I have the strong soul: let me teach you, here. I think I have borne enough and long enough, And patiently enough, the world's remarks, To have my own way now, unblamed by all. It does so happen, I rejoice for it, This most unhoped-for issue cuts the knot. There's not a better way of settling claims Than this; God sends the accident express; And were it for my subjects' good, no more, 'Twere best thus ordered. I am thankful now, Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive, And bless God simply, or should almost fear To walk so smoothly to my ends at last. Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate! How strong I am! could Norbert see me now!

CONSTANCE.

Let me consider. It is all too strange.

QUEEN.

You, Constance, learn of me; do you, like me. You are young, beautiful: my own, best girl, You will have many lovers, and love one—Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours, And taller than he is, for you are tall.

Love him like me! give all away to him; Think never of yourself; throw by your pride, Hope, fear,—your own good as you saw it once And love him simply for his very self.

Remember, I (and what am I to you?)

Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life, Do all but just unlove him! he loves me.

CONSTANCE.

He shall.

QUEEN.

You, step inside my inmost heart. Give me your own heart—let us have one heart— I'll come to you for counsel; "This he says, This he does, what should this amount to, pray? Beseech you, change it into current coin. Is that worth kisses? shall I please him there?" And then we'll speak in turn of you—what else? Your love (according to your beauty's worth) For you shall have some noble love, all gold— Whom choose you? we will get him at your choice. -Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since I felt as I must die or be alone Breathing my soul into an ear like yours. Now, I would face the world with my new life, With my new crown. I'll walk around the rooms. And then come back and tell you how it feels. How soon a smile of God can change the world! How we are all made for happiness-how work Grows play, adversity a winning fight! True, I have lost so many years. What then? Many remain—God has been very good. You, stay here. 'Tis as different from dreams,-From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss, As these stone statues from the flesh and blood. The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's moon!

[She goes out. Dance-music from within.

PART THIRD.

NORBERT enters.

NORRERT.

Well! we have but one minute and one word-

CONSTANCE.

I am yours, Norbert!

NORBERT.

Yes, mine.

CONSTANCE.

Not till now!

You were mine. Now I give myself to you.

NORBERT.

Constance!

CONSTANCE.

Your own! I know the thriftier way Of giving—haply, 'tis the wiser way.

Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole
Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,
With a new largess still at each despair)
And force you keep in sight the deed, reserve
Exhaustless till the end my part and yours,
My giving and your taking, both our joys
Dying together. Is it the wiser way?
I choose the simpler; I give all at once.
Know what you have to trust to, trade upon.
Use it, abuse it,—anything but say
Hercafter, "Had I known she loved me so,
And what my means, I might have thriven with it."
This is your means. I give you all myself.

NORBERT.

I take you and thank God.

CONSTANCE.

Look on through years! We cannot kiss a second day like this, Else were this earth, no earth.

NORBERT.

With this day's heat We shall go on through years of cold.

CONSTANCE.

So best.

I try to see those years—I think I see.

You walk quick and new warmth comes; you look back And lay all to the first glow—not sit down For ever brooding on a day like this While seeing the embers whiten and love die. Yes, love lives best in its effect; and mine, Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

NORBERT.

Just so. I take and know you all at once.
Your soul is disengaged so easily,
Your face is there, I know you; give me time,
Let me be proud and think you shall know me.
My soul is slower: in a life I roll
The minute out in which you condense yours—
The whole slow circle round you I must move.
To be just you. I look to a long life
To decompose this minute, prove its worth.
"Tis the sparks' long succession one by one
Shall show you in the end what fire was crammed
In that mere stone you struck: you could not know,
If it lay ever unproved in your sight,
As now my heart lies? your own warmth would hide
Its coldness, were it cold.

CONSTANCE.

But how prove, how?

NORBERT.

Prove in my life, you ask?

CONSTANCE.

Quick, Norbert-how?

NORBERT.

That's easy told. I count life just a stuff
To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.
Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve.
As with the body—he who hurls a lance
Or heaps up stone on stone, shows strength alike,
So I will seize and use all means to prove
And show this soul of mine you crown as yours,
And justify us both.

CONSTANCE.

Could you write books, Paint pictures! one sits down in poverty And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.

NORBERT.

And loves one's painting and one's writing too, And not one's mistress! All is best, believe, And we best as no other than we are. We live, and they experiment on life Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof To overlook the farther. Let us be The thing they look at! I might take that face And write of it and paint it—to what end? For whom? what pale dictatress in the air Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life She makes despised for ever? You are mine, Made for me, not for others in the world, Nor yet for that which I should call my art, That cold calm power to see how fair you look. I come to you—I leave you not, to write Or paint. You are, I am. Let Rubens there Paint us.

CONSTANCE.

So best!

NORBERT.

I understand your soul.
You live, and rightly sympathise with life,
With action, power, success: this way is straight.
And days were short beside, to let me change
The craft my childhood learnt; my craft shall serve.
Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,
Manure their barren lives and force the fruit
First for themselves, and afterward for me
In the due tithe; the task of some one man,
By ways of work appointed by themselves.
I am not bid create, they see no star
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that—
But bind in one and carry out their wills.
So I began: to-night sees how I end.
What if it see, too, my first outbreak here

Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy, The instincts of the heart that teach the head? What if the people have discerned in me The dawn of the next nature, the new man Whose will they venture in the place of theirs, And whom they trust to find them out new ways To the new heights which yet he only sees? I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen, This people—in our phrase, this mass of men— See how the mass lies passive to my hand And how my hand is plastic, and you by To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first. My will be on this people! then, the strain, The grappling of the potter with his clay, The long uncertain struggle,—the success In that uprising of the spirit-work. The vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip, While rounded fair for lower men to see The Graces in a dance they recognise With turbulent applause and laughs of heart! So triumph ever shall renew itself; Ever to end in efforts higher yet, Ever begun-

CONSTANCE.

I ever helping?

NORBERT.

Thus!

[As he embraces her, enter the QUEEN.

CONSTANCE.

Hist, madam—so I have performed my part. You see your gratitude's true decency, Norbert? a little slow in seeing it!
Begun to end the sooner. What's a kiss?

NORBERT.

Constance!

CONSTANCE.

Why, must I teach it you again? You want a witness to your duliness, sir?

What was I saying this ten minutes long? Then I repeat—when some young handsome man Like you has acted out a part like yours, Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond, So very far beyond him, as he says— So hopelessly in love, that but to speak Would prove him mad, he thinks judiciously, And makes some insignificant good soul Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant And very stalking-horse to cover him In following after what he dares not face— When his end's gained—(sir, do you understand?) When she, he dares not face, has loved him first, - May I not say so, madam?—tops his hope, And overpasses so his wildest dream, With glad consent of all, and most of her The confidant who brought the same about-Why, in the moment when such joy explodes, I do say that the merest gentleman Will not start rudely from the stalking-horse, Dismiss it with a "There, enough of you!" Forget it, show his back unmannerly; But like a liberal heart will rather turn And say, "A tingling time of hope was ours— Betwixt the fears and faulterings—we two lived A chanceful time in waiting for the prize. The confidant, the Constance, served not ill; And though I shall forget her in due time, Her use being answered now, as reason bids, Nay as herself bids from her heart of hearts, Still, she has rights, the first thanks go to her, The first good praise goes to the prosperous tool, And the first—which is the last—thankful kiss."

NORBERT.

-Constance? it is a dream—ah see you smile!

CONSTANCE.

So, now his part being properly performed, Madam, I turn to you and finish mine As duly—I do justice in my turn.

Yes, madam, he has loved you—long and well—He could not hope to tell you so—'twas I Who served to prove your soul accessible.

I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place, When oft they had wandered out into despair,

And kept love constant toward its natural aim. Enough—my part is played; you stoop half-way And meet us royally and spare our fears—'Tis like yourself—he thanks you, so do I. Take him—with my full heart! my work is praised By what comes of it. Be you happy, both! Yourself—the only one on earth who can—Do all for him, much more than a mere heart Which though warm is not useful in its warmth As the silk vesture of a queen! fold that Around him gently, tenderly. For him—For him,—he knows his own part.

NORBERT.

Have you done? I take the jest at last. Should I speak now? Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish child, Or did you but accept it? Well—at least, You lose by it.

CONSTANCE.

Now, madam, 'tis your turn.

Restrain him still from speech a little more
And make him happier and more confident!
Pity him, madam, he is timid yet.

Mark. Norbert! do not shrink now! Here I yield
My whole right in you to the Queen, observe!
With her go put in practice the great schemes
You teem with, follow the career else closed—
Be all you cannot be except by her!

Behold her.—Madam, say for pity's sake
Anything—frankly say you love him—Else
He'll not believe it: there's more earnest in
His fear than you conceive—I know the man.

NORBERT.

I know the woman somewhat, and confess I thought she had jested better—she begins To overcharge her part. I gravely wait Your pleasure, madam: where is my reward?

QUEEN.

Norbert, this wild girl (whom I recognise Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit, Eccentric speech and variable mirth,

Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange) -May still be right: I may do well to speak And make authentic what appears a dream To even myself. For, what she says, is true-Yes, Norbert—what you spoke but now of love, Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me. But justified a warmth felt long before. Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall say,— Strange! but I do grow stronger, now 'tis said, Your courage helps mine: you did well to speak To-night, the night that crowns your twelvemenths' toil-But still I had not waited to discern Your heart so long, believe me! From the first The source of so much zeal was almost plain, In absence even of your own words just now Which opened out the truth. 'Tis very strange, But takes a happy ending—in your love Which mine meets: be it so—as you choose me. So I choose you.

NORBERT.

And worthily you choose i I will not be unworthy your esteem, No, madam. I do love you; I will meet Your nature, now I know it; this was well, I see,—you dare and you are justified: But none had ventured such experiment, Less versed than you in nobleness of heart, Less confident of finding it in me. I like that thus you test me ere you grant The dearest, richest, beauteousest and best Of women to my arms! 'tis like yourself! So—back again into my part's set words— Devotion to the uttermost is yours, But no, you cannot, madam, even you, Create in me the love our Constance does. Or—something truer to the tragic phrase— Not you magnolia-bell superb with scent Invites a certain insect—that's myself— But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground: I take this lady!

CONSTANCE.

Stay—not her's, the trap—Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst of all. (He is too cunning, madam!) it was I, I. Norbert, who . . .

NORBERT.

You, was it, Constance! Then, But for the grace of this divinest hour Which gives me you, I should not pardon here. I am the Queen's: she only knows my brain—She may experiment therefore on my heart And I instruct her too by the result; But you, sweet, you who know me, who so long Have told my heart-beats over, held my life In those white hands of yours,—it is not well!

CONSTANCE.

Tush! I have said it, did I not say it all? The life, for her—the heart-beats, for her sake!

NORBERT.

Enough! my cheek grows red, I think. Your test! There's not the meanest woman in the world, Not she I least could love in all the world, Whom, did she love me, did love prove itself, I dared insult as you insult me now. Constance, I could say, if it must be said, "Take back the soul you offer-I keep mine" But—" Take the soul still quivering on your hand, The soul so offered, which I cannot use, And, please you, give it to some friend of mine, For—what's the trifle he requites me with?" I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man, That two may mock her heart if it succumb? No! fearing God and standing 'neath his heaven, I would not dare insult a woman so, Were she the meanest woman in the world, And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

CONSTANCE.

Norbert!

NORBERT.

I love once as I live but once.
What case is this to think or talk about?
I love you. Would it mend the case at all
Should such a step as this kill love in me?
Your part were done: account to God for it.

But mine—could murdered love get up again, And kneel to whom you pleased to designate And make you mirth? It is too horrible. You did not know this, Constance? now you know That body and soul have each one life, but one: And here's my love, here, living, at your feet.

CONSTANCE.

See the Queen! Norbert—this one more last word—If thus you have taken jest for earnest—thus Loved me in earnest...

NORBERT.

Ah, no jest holds here! Where is the laughter in which jests break up? And what this horror that grows palpable? Madam—why grasp you thus the balcony? Have I done ill? Have I not spoken the truth? How could I other? Was it not your test, To try me, and what my love for Constance meant? Madam, your royal soul itself approves, The first, that I should choose thus! so one takes A beggar-asks him what would buy his child, And then approves the expected laugh of scorn Returned as something noble from the rags. Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar! Ha, what's this? You two glare each at each like panthers now. Constance—the world fades; only you stand there! You did not in to-night's wild whirl of things Sell me—your soul of souls, for any price? No—no—'tis easy to believe in you. Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still--Though I should curse, I love you. I am love And cannot change! love's self is at your feet.

[Queen goes out.

CONSTANCE.

Feel my heart; let it die against your own.

NORBERT.

Against my own! explain not; let this be. This is life's height. CONSTANCE.

Yours! Yours! Yours!

NORBERT.

You and I-

Why care by what meanders we are here In the centre of the labyrinth? men have died Trying to find this place out, which we have found.

CONSTANCE.

Found, found!

NORBERT.

Sweet, never fear what she can do—We are past harm now.

CONSTANCE.

On the breast of God. I thought of men—as if you were a man. Tempting him with a crown!

NORBERT.

This must end here—

It is too perfect!

CONSTANCE.

There's the music stopped. What measured heavy tread? it is one blaze About me and within me.

NORBERT.

Oh, some death Will run its sudden finger round this spark, And sever us from the rest—

CONSTANCE.

And so do well.

Now the doors open—

NORBERT.

'Tis the guard comes.

CONSTANCE.

Kiss I

SAUL.

T.

Said Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,

Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.

And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent.

Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet, Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet. For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days, Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer or of praise,

To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife, And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

II.

Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child, with his dew On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat Were now raging to torture the desert!"

III.

Then I, as was meet,

Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet, And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;

I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped; Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,

That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I prayed,

And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid,
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice
replied.

At the first I saw nought but the blackness; but soon I descried

SAUL. 493

A something more black than the blackness—the vast the upright

Main prop which sustains the pavision: and slow into sight Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all;—
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,—showed Saul.

IV.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop; both arms stretched out wide

On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to each side: He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there,—as, caught in his pangs

And waiting his change the king-serpent all heavily hangs, Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark, blind and dumb

٧.

Then I turned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine round its chords

Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the 1 contide—those sunbeams like swords!

And I first played the tune all our sheep l now, as, one after one,

So docile they come to the pen-door, till folding be done.

They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's had:

And now one after one seeks its lodgings, as star follows star Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far!

VI.

-Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will each leave his mate

To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate, Till for boldness they fight one another: and then, what has weight

To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half
mouse!—

God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear.

To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

VII.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song, when hand

Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great hearts expand

And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And then, the last song

When the dead man is praised on his journey—"Bear, bear him along

With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! are balm-seeds not here

To console us? The land has none left, such as he on the bier. Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!"—And then, the glad chaunt

Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she whom we vaunt

As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the great march

Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch Nought can break; who shall harm them, our friends?—Then, the chorus intoned

As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned . . . But I stopped here—for here in the darkness, Saul groaned.

VIII.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;

And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered,—and sparkles 'gan dart

From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a start—All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart. So the head—but the body still moved not, still hung there

And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked, As I sang,—

IX.

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigour! no spirit feels waste, Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor sinew unbraced. Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock— The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree,—the cool silver shock

Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—the hunt of the bear, And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.

SAUL. 495

And the meal—the rich dates—yellowed over with gold dust divine,

And the locust's-flesh steeped in the pitcher; the full draught of wine,

And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bullrushes tell That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well. How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ

All the heart and the soul and the senses, for ever in joy!

Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou didst guard

When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward?

Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung

The low song of the nearly-departed, and heard her faint tongue

Joining in while it could to the witness. 'Let one more attest, I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all was for best.

Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not much,
—but the rest.

And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence grew

Such result as from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained true!

And the friends of thy boyhood-that boyhood of wonder and hope,

Present promise, and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope—

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;

And all gifts which the world offers singly, on one head combine!

On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage, like the throe

That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour, and lets the gold go:
High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning it,
—all

Brought to blaze on the head of one creature-King Saul!"

x.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, heart, hand, harp and voice,

Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I say, The Lord's army in rapture of service, strains through its array,

And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!" cried I, and stopped,

And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung propt

By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his name.

Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the aim,

And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held, (he alone,

While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust of stone

A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves grasp of the sheet?

Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,

And there fronts you, stark, black but alive yet, your mountain of old,

With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold-

Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and scar

Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail, there they are!

Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest

Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on its crest

For their food in the ardours of summer! One long shudder thrilled

All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was stilled,

At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.

What was gone, what remained? all to traverse 'twixt hore and despair—

Death was past, life not come—so he waited. Awhile his right hand

Held the brow, helped the eres left too vacant forthwith to remand

To their place what new objects should enter: 'twas Saul as before.

I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt any more

Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from the

At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow decline Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and entwine Base with base to knit strength more intense: so, arm folded

in arm O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided. SAUL. 497

XI.

What spell or what charm. (For, awhile there was trouble within me) what next should I

To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song filled to the verge

His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty! Beyond, on what fields.

Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they put

He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not—he lets me praise

Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII.

Then fancies grew rife

Which had come long ago on the pastures, when round me the sheep

Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep, And I lay in my hollow, and mused on the world that might lie 'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and

the sky: And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be passed with my flocks,

Let me people at least with my fancies, the plains and the

Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know! Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that gains,

And the prudence that keeps what men strive for." And now these old trains

Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so once more the string

Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

XIII.

"Yea, my king,"

I began -- "thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that spring

From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by brute:

In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears fruit. K K

Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem trembled first

Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then safely outburst The fan-branches all round; and thou mindedst when these too, in turn

Broke a-bloom and the palin-tree seemed perfect: yet more was to learn,

Ev'n the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our dates shall we slight,

When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the plight

Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them? Not so! stem and branch

Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-wine shall staunch

Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee such wine.

Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be thine!

By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still shalt
enjoy

More indeed, than at first when inconscious, the life of a boy. Crush that life, and behold its wine running! each deed thou hast done

Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as the sun Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though tempests efface,

Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must every where trace

The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of thy will,

Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill Thy whole people the countless, with ardour, till they too give forth

A like cheer to their sons, who in turn fill the south and the north

With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the past.

But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last.

As the lion when age dims his eye-ball, the rose at her height, So with man -so his power and his beauty for ever take flight.

No! again a long draught of my soul-wine! look forth o'er the years—

Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the seer's!

Is Saul dead? in the depth of the vale make his tomb—bid arise

A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till built to the skies.

SAUL. 499

Let it mark where the great First King slumbers—whose fame would ye know?

Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go In great characters cut by the scribe, Such was Saul, so he did;

With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid,—
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which fault to
amenda

In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall spend

(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and record With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's great word

Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's a-wave With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet winds rave:

So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou art."

XIV.

And behold while I sang . . But O Thou who didst grant me that day,

And before it not seldom hast granted, thy help to essay Carry on and complete an adventure,—my Shield and my

Sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my
word.—-

Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavour And scaling the highest man's thought could, gazed hopeless as

On the new stretch of Heaven above me—till, Mighty to save, Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne from man's grave!

Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my heart,
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels that night I
took part,

As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep, And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep!

For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron retrieves

Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV.

I say then,—my song While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more strong Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand replumed His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance bathes,

He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of

And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before. He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent

The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though much spent

Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did choose,

To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose. So sank he along by the tent-prop, till, stayed by the pile Of his armour and war cloak and garments he leaned there

Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there awhile,

Ano sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop, to raise

His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched on the praise

I foresaw from all men in all times, to the man patient there, And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware

That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak-roots which please

To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow

Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: throwing hair

The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with kind power—

All my face back, intent to pruse it, as men do a flower. Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinis d mine—And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign? I yearned—" Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss, I would add to that life of the past, both the future and this. I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence, At this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart to dispense!"

XVI.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song more! out-broke—

"I have gone the whole round of Creation: I saw and I spoke!

SAUL. 501

I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned him again

His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw.

I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's law! Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was asked,

Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at wisdom laid bare. Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite care!

Do I task any faculty highest, to image success? I but open my eyes, -and perfection, no more and no less, In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod. And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew (With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too) The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to God's All-Complete, As by each new obcisance in spirit, I climb to his feet! Yet with all this abounding experience, this Deity known, I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own. There's one faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink, I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think) Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold! I could love if I durst! But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain, for love's sake!

-What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small,

Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appal?

In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,

That I doubt his own love can compete with it? here, the parts

shift?

Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the end, what Began?—Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man, And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?

Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,

To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul, Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole? And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest) These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the

best?

Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute of night?

Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mistake, Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him awake From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony yet To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?—or endure! The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure.

By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss, And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggle in this.

XVII.

"I believe it! 'tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive: In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.

All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my prayer

As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.

From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread
Sabaoth:

I will?—the mere atoms despise me! and why am I loth
To look that, even that in the face too? why is it I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance? what stops my despair?
This;—'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what
man Would do!

See the king—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.

Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
To fill up his life, to starve my own out, I would—knowing
which,

I know that my service is perfect.—Oh, speak through me now!

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wilt Thou—so wilt Thou!

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost Crown—And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath, Turn of eye, wave of hand, that Salvation joins issue with death!

As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved Thy power, that exists with and for it, of Being beloved! He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand

the most weak.

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek

503 SAUL.

In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be A Face like my face that receives thee: a Man like to me, Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever! a Hand like this . hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

XVIII.

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night. There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right, Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive—the aware— I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there, As a runner beset by the populace famished for news-

Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with her crews:

And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted not.

For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported—

suppressed

All the turnult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest, Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest. Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth-Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth; In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills; In the shuddering forests' new awe; in the sudden wind-thrills; In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with an eye sidling still

Tho' averted, in wonder and dread; and the birds stiff and

That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with

E'en the serpent that slid away silent, -he felt the new Law. The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the flowers:

The same worked in the heart of the cedar, and moved the vine-bowers.

And the little brooks witnessing, murmured, persistent and low, With their obstinate, all but husned voices—E'en so! it is so.

"DE GUSTIBUS—"

ı.

Your ghost will walk, you lover or trees,

(If loves remain)
In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
Making love, say,—
The happier they!
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
With the beanflowers' boon,
And the blackbird's tune,
And May, and June!

II.

What I love best in all the world, Is, a castle, precipice-encurled, In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine. Or look for me, old fellow of mine, (If I get my head from out the mouth O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands, And come again to the land of lands)— In a sea-side house to the farther south, Where the baked cicalas die of drouth, And one sharp tree ('tis a cypress) stands, By the many hundred years red-rusted, Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted, My sentinel to guard the sands To the water's edge. For, what expands Without the house, but the great opaque Blue breadth of sea, and not a break? While, in the house, for ever crumbles Some fragment of the frescoed walls, From blisters where a scorpion sprawls. A girl bare-footed brings and tumbles

Down on the parement, green-flesh melons, And says there's news to-day—the king Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing, Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling. —She hopes they have not caught the felons. Italy, my Italy!

Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
(When fortune's malice
Lost her, Calais.)

Open my heart and you will see Graved inside of it, "Italy." Such lovers old are I and she; So it always was, so it still shall be!

WOMEN AND ROSES

I.

I DREAM of a red-rose tree. And which of its roses three Is the dearest rose to me?

II.

Round and round, like a dance of snow In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go Floating the women faded for ages, Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages. Then follow the women fresh and gay, Living and loving and loved to-day Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens, Beauties unborn. And all, to one cadence, They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III.

Dear rose, thy term is reached, Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached Bees pass it unimpeached.

IV.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time!
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you?
Oh! to possess, and be possessed!
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast!
But once of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink once and die!—In vain, the same fashion
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

v.

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed; Thy cup is ruby-rimmed, Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

VI.

Deep as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips!
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure!
Girdle me once! But no—in their old measure
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

VII.

Dear rose without a thorn, Thy bud's the babe unborn: First streak of a new morn.

VIII.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear!
What's far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our own flesh moulders.
What shall arrive with the cycle's change?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,
Shaped her to his mind!—Alas! in like manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

PROTUS.

Among these latter busts we count by scores, Half-emperors and quarter-emperors, Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged vest, Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the breast One loves a baby face, with violets there, Violets instead of laurel in the hair, As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. "Protus ends a period Of empery beginning with a god: Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant; Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant. And if he quickened breath there, 'twould like fire Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire. A fame that he was missing, spread afar— The world, from its four corners, rose in war, Till he was borne out on a balcony To pacify the world when it should see. The captains ranged before him, one, his hand Made baby points at, gained the chief command. And day by day more beautiful he grew In shape, all said, in feature and in hue, While young Greek sculptors gazing on the child Were, so, with old Greek sculpture, reconciled. Already sages laboured to condense In easy tomes a life's experience: And artists took grave counsel to impart In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art— To make his graces prompt as blossoming Of plentifully-watered palms in spring: Since well beseems it, whose mounts the throne, For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone, And mortals love the letters of his name."

—Stop! Have you turned two pages? Still the same. New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say How that same year, on such a month and day, "John the Pannonian, groundedly believed A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand reprieved The Empire from its fate the year before,— Came, had a mind to take the crown, and wore The same for six years, (during which the Huns Kept off their fingers from us) till his sons Put something in his liquor "—and so forth. Then a new reign. Stay—"Take at its just worth" (Subjoins an annotator) "what I give!

As hearsay. Some think John let Protus live And slip away. "Tis said, he reached man's age At some blind northern court; made first a page, Then, tutor to the children—last, of use About the hunting-stables. I deduce He wrote the little tract 'On worming dogs,' Whereof the name in sundry catalogues Is extant yet. A Protus of the Race Is runoured to have died a monk in Thrace,—And if the same, he reached senility."

Here's John the Smith's rough-hammered head. Great eye Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite can To give you the crown-grasper. What a man!

HOLY-CROSS DAY.

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME.

["Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews: as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome, should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted, blind, restive and ready-to-perish Hebrews! now paternally brought—nay (for He saith, 'Compel them to come in') haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him: though not to my lord be altogether the glory."—Diary by the Bishop's Secretary, 1600.]

Though what the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect:

I. '

FEE, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!
Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week.
Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,
Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime
Gives us the summons—'tis sermon-time.

II.

Boh, here's Barnabas! Job, that's you?
Up stumps Solomon—bustling too?
Shame, man! greedy beyond your years
To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?
Fair play's a jewel! leave friends in the lurch?
Stand on'a line ere you start for the church.

III.

Higgledy-piggledy, packed we lie, Rats in a hamper, swine in a stye, Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve. Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve, Hist! square shoulders, settle your thumbs And buzz for the bishop—here he comes.

IV.

Bow, wow, wow—a bone for the dog!
I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.
What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
To help and handle my lord's hour-glass!
Didst ever behold so lithe a chine?
His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

v.

Aaron's asleep—shove hip to haunch, Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch! Look at the purse with the tassel and knob, And the gown with the angel and thingumbob. What's he at, quotha? reading his text! Now you've his curtsey—and what comes next?

r vi.

See to our converts—you doomed black dozen— No stealing away—nor cog nor cozen! You five that were thieves, deserve it fairly; You seven that were beggars, will live less sparely; You took your turn and dipped in the hat, Got fortune—and fortune gets you; mind that!

VII.

Give your first groan—compunction's at work; And soft! from a Jew you mount to a Turk. Lo, Micah,—the selfsame beard on chin He was four times already converted in! Here's a knife, clip quick—it's a sign of grace— Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

vni.

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at?
I know a point where his text falls pat.
I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now
Went to my heart and made me vow
I meddle no more with the worst of trades—
Let somebody else pay his serenades.

ıx.

Groan altogether now, whee —hee!
It's a-work, it's a-work, ah, woe is me!
It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,
Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist;
Jew-brutes, with sweat and blood well spent
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

X.

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds, Yelled, pricked us out to this church like hounds. It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed Which gutted my purse, would throttle my creed. And it overflows, when, to even the odd, Men I helped to their sins, help me to their God.

XI.

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock, And the rest sit silent and count the clock, Since forced to muse the appoined time On these precious facts and truths sublime,—Let us fitly employ it, under our breath, In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

XII.

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died, Called sons and sons' sons to his side, And spoke, "This world has been harsh and strange, Something is wrong, there needeth a change. But what, or, where? at the last, or first? In one point only we sinned, at worst.

XIII.

'The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet, And again in his border see Israel set. When Judah beholds Jerusalem, The stranger-seed shall be joined to them: To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave. So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

XIV.

"Ay, the children of the chosen race
Shall carry and bring them to their place:
In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
The oppressor triumph for evermore?

XV.

"God spoke, and gave us the word to keep:
Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
'Mid a faithless world,—at watch and ward,
Till the Christ at the end relieve our guard.
By his servant Moses the watch was set:
Though near upon cock-crow—we keep it yet.

'XVI.

"Thou! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came, By the starlight naming a dubious Name! And if we were too heavy with sleep—too rash With fear—O Thou, if that martyr-gas i Fell on thee coming to take thine own, And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne—

XVII.

"Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus. But, the judgment over, join sides with us! Thine too is the cause! and not more thine Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine, Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed, Who maintain thee in word, and defy thee in deed!

XVIII.

"We withstood Christ then? be mindful how At least we withstand Barabbas now! Was our outrage sore? but the worst we spared, To have called these—Christians,—had we dared! Let defiance to them, pay mistrust of thee, And Rome make amends for Calvary!

XIX.

"By the torture, prolonged from age to age, By the infamy, Israel's heritage, By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace, By the badge of shame, by the felon's place, By the branding-tool, the bloody whip, And the summons to Christian fellowship,

XX.

"We boast our proofs, that at least the Jew Would wrest Christ's name from the Devil's crew. Thy face took never so deep a shade But we fought them in it, God our aid! A trophy to bear, as we march, a band South, east, and on to the Pleasant Land!"

[The present Pope abolished this had business of the sermon.—R. B.]

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL:

A PICTURE AT FANO.

T.

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

11.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
And suddenly my head be covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
You heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door!

III.

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garments spread?

IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and supprest.

v.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired!

I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O world, as God has made it! all is beauty:
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared?

VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend) that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
—My angel with me too: and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame, (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)

VIII.

And since he did not work so earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong,—
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My Love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

CLEON.

'As certain also of your own poets have said "-

CLEON the poet, (from the sprinkled isles, Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea, And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps "Greece")— To Protos in his Tyranny: much health!

They give thy letter to me, even now: I read and seem as if I heard thee speak. The master of thy galley still unlades Gift after gift; they block my court at last And pile themselves along its portico Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee: And one white she-slave from the group dispersed Of black and white slaves, (like the chequer-work Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift, Now covered with this settle-down of doves) One lyric woman, in her crocus vest Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands Commends to me the strainer and the cup Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence! For so shall men remark, in such an act Of love for him whose song gives life its joy, Thy recognition of the use of life; Nor call thy spirit barely adequate To help on life in straight ways, broad enough For yulgar souls, by ruling and the rest. Thou, in the daily building of thy tower, Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil, Or through dim hills of unapparent growth, Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect, Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake-Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope Of some eventual rest a-top of it, Whence, all the turnult of the building hushed, Thou first of men mightst look out to the east.

The vulgar saw thy tower; thou sawest the sun. For this, I promise on thy festival To pour libation, looking o'er the sea, Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak Thy great words, and describe thy royal face—Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here. It is as thou hast heard: in one short life I. Cleon, have effected all those things Thou wonderingly dost enumerate. That epos on thy hundred plates of gold Is mine,—and also mine the little chaunt, So sure to rise from every fishing-bark When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their nets. The image of the sun-god on the phare Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine . The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length, As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too. I know the true proportions of a man And woman also, not observed before: And I have written three books on the soul. Proving absurd all written hitherto, And putting us to ignorance again. For music,—why, I have combined the moods, Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine; Thus much the people know and recognise, Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not. We of these latter days, with greater mind Than our forerunners, since more composite, Look not so great (beside their simple way) To a judge who only sees one way at once, One mind-point, and no other at a time,— Compares the small part of a man of us With some whole man of the heroic age, Great in his way,—not ours, nor meant for ours, And ours is greater, had we skill to know. Yet, what we call this life of men on earth, This sequence of the soul's achievements here. Being, as I find much reason to conceive, Intended to be viewed eventually As a great whole, not analysed to parts, But each part having reference to all,— How shall a certain part, pronounced complete, Endure effacement by another part? Was the thing done?—Then what's to do again? See, in the chequered pavement opposite,

cleon. **517**

Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb, And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid-He did not overlay them, superimpose The new upon the old and blot it out But laid them on a level in his work, Making at last a picture; there it lies. So, first the perfect separate forms were made, The portions of mankind-and after, so, Occurred the combination of the same. Or where had been a progress, otherwise? Mankind, made up of all the single men,— In such a synthesis the labour ends. Now, mark me—those divine men of old time Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point The outside verge that rounds our faculty; And where they reached, who can do more than reach? It takes but little water just to touch At some one point the inside of a sphere, And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest In due succession: but the finer air Which not so palpably nor obviously, Though no less universally, can touch The whole circumference of that emptied sphere, Fills it more fully than the water did; Holds thrice the weight of water in itself Resolved into a subtler element. And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full Up to the visible height-and after, void; Not knowing air's more hidden properties. And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus To vindicate his purpose in its life-Why stay we on the earth unless to grow? Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out, That he or other God, descended here And, once for all, showed simultaneously What, in its nature, never can be shown Piecemeal or in succession;—showed, I say, The worth both absolute and relative Of all His children from the birth of time, His instruments for all appointed work. I now go on to image,-might we hear The judgment which should give the due to each, Show where the labour lay and where the ease, And prove Zeus' self, the latent, everywhere! This is a dream. But no dream, let us hope, That years and days, the summers and the springs Follow each other with unwaning powers-The grapes which dve thy wine, are richer far

Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock; The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe; The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet; The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers: That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave, Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds, Refines upon the women of my youth. What, and the soul alone deteriorates? I have not chanted verse like Homer's, no-Nor swept string like Terpander, no-nor carved And painted men like Phidias and his friend: I am not great as they are, point by point: But I have entered into sympathy With these four, running these into one soul, Who, separate, ignored each others' arts. Say, is it nothing that I know them all? The wild flower was the larger—I have dashed Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit, And show a better flower if not so large. I stand, myself. Refer this to the gods Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare (All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext That such a gift by chance lay in my hand, Discourse of lightly or depreciate? It might have fallen to another's hand—what then? I pass too surely—let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask. This being with me as I declare, O king, My works, in all these varicoloured kinds, So done by me, accepted so by men--Thou askest if (my soul thus m men's hearts) I must not be accounted to attain The very crown and proper end of life. Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up, I face death with success in my right hand: Whether I fear death less than dost thyself The fortunate of men. "For" (writest thou) "Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought: Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing, The pictures men shall study; while my life, Complete and whole now in its power and joy, Dies altogether with my brain and arm Is lost indeed; since,—what survives myself? The brazen statue that o'crlooks my grave. Set on the promontory which I named. And that—some supple courtier of my heir

CLEON. 519

Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps, To fix the rope to, which best drags it down. I go, then: triumph thou, who dost not go!"

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind. Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief. That admiration grows as knowledge grows? That imperfection means perfection hid, Reserved in part, to grace the after-time? If, in the morning of philosophy, Ere aught had been recorded, aught perceived, Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird, Ere man had yet appeared upon the stage-Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced The perfectness of others yet unseen. Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee "Wilt thou go on a step, improve on this, Do more for visible creatures than is done?" Thou wouldst have answered, "Ay, by making each Grow conscious in himself—by that alone. All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock, The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims And slides; the birds take flight, forth range the beasts, Till life's mechanics can no further go— And all this joy in natural life, is put, Like fire from off Thy finger into each, So exquisitely perfect is the same. But 'tis pure fire—and they mere matter are; It has them, not they it: and so I choose, For man, Thy last premeditated work (If I might add a glory to this scheme) That a third thing should stand apart from both, A quality arise within the soul, Which, intro-active, made to supervise And feel the orce it has, may view itself, And so be happy." Man might live at first The animal life: but is there nothing more? In due time, let him critically learn How he lives; and, the more he gets to know Of his own life's adaptabilities, The more joy-giving will his life become. The man who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said: "Let progress end at once,—man make no step Beyond the natural man, the better beast, Using his senses, not the sense of sense."

In man there's failure, only since he left The lower and inconscious forms of life. We called it an advance, the rendering plain A spirit might grow conscious of that life, And, by new lore so added to the old,. Take each step higher over the brute's head. This grew the only life, the pleasure-house, Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul, Which whole surrounding flats of natural life ' Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to; A tower that crowns a country. The soul now climbs it just to perish there, For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream-We know this, which we had not else perceived) That there's a world of capability For joy, spread round about us, meant for us, Inviting us; and still the soul craves all, And still the flesh replies, "Take no jot more Than ere you climbed the tower to look abroad! Nay, so much less, as that fatigue has brought Deduction to it." We struggle-fain to enlarge Our bounded physical recipiency, Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life, Repair the waste of age and sickness. It skills not: life's inadequate to joy, As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take. They praise a fountain in my garden here Wherein a Naiad sends the water-spurt Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise. What if I told her, it is just a thread From that great river which the hills shut up, And mock her with my leave to take the same? The artificer has given her one small tube Past power to widen or exchange—what boots To know she might spout oceans if she could? She cannot lift beyond her first straight thread. And so a man can use but a man's joy While he sees God's. Is it, for Zeus to boast "See, man, how happy I live, and despair-That I may be still happier—for thy use!" If this were so, we could not thank our Lord, As hearts beat on to doing: 'tis not so-Malice it is not. Is it carelessness? Still, no. If care—where is the sign, I ask— And get no answer: and agree in sum, O king, with thy profound discouragement. Who seest the wider but to sigh the more. Most progress is most failure! thou sayest well

The last point now: -- thou dost except a case-Holding joy not impossible to one With artist-gifts—to such a man as I— Who leave behind me living works indeed; For, such a poem, such a painting lives. What? dost thou verily trip upon a word, Confound the accurate view of what joy is (Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine) With feeling joy? confound the knowing how And showing how to live (my faculty) With actually living?—Otherwise Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king? Because in my great epos I display How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act-Is this as though I acted? if I paint, Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young? Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself The many years of pain that taught me art! Indeed, to know is something, and to prove How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more: But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too. You rower with the moulded muscles there Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I. I can write love-odes—thy fair slave's an ode. I get to sing of love, when grown too grey For being beloved: she turns to that young man The muscles all a-ripple on his back. I know the joy of kingship: well—thou art king!

"But," sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat, To find thee tripping on a mere word) "what Thou writest, paintest, stays: that does not die: Sappho survives, because we sing her songs, And Æschylus, because we read his plays!" Why, if they live still, let them come and take Thy slave in my despite—drink from thy cup— Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive? Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,— In this, that every day my sense of joy Grows more acute, my soul (intensified In power and insight) more enlarged, more keen; While every day my hairs fall more and more, My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase— The horror quickening still from year to year, The consummation coming past escape When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy-When all my works wherein I prove my worth, Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,

Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou, I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man, The man who loved his life so over much, Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible, I dare at times imagine to my need Some future state revealed to us by Zeus, Unlimited in capability For joy, as this is in desire for joy, To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us. That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait On purpose to make sweet the life at large— Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death We burst there as the worm into the fly, Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But, no! Zeus has not yet revealed it; and, alas! He must have done so—were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought die, Glad for what was. Farewell. And for the rest, I cannot tell thy messenger aright Where to deliver what he bears of thine To one called Paulus—we have heard his fame Indeed, if Christus be not one with him— I know not, nor am troubled much to know. Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew, As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised, Hath access to a secret shut from us? Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king, In stooping to inquire of such an one. As if his answer could impose at all. He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write. Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ; And (as I gathered from a bystander) Their doctrines could be held by no sane man.

THE TWINS.

"Give" and "It-shall-be-given-unto you."

Ŧ.

Grand rough old Martin Luther
Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,
The better the uncouther:
Do roses stick like burrs?

11.

A beggar asked an alms
One day at an abbey-door,
Satd Luther; but, seized with qualms
The Abbot replied, "We're poor!"

III.

" Poor, who had plenty once,
"When gifts fell thick as rain:

"But they give us nought, for the nonce,
"And how should we give again?"

IV.

Then the beggar, "See your sins!

" Of old, unless I err,

"Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,

" Date and Dabitur."

v.

"While Date was in good case Dabitur flourished too:

"For Dabitur's lenten face,

"No wonder if Date rue."

VI.

"Would ye retrieve the one?

"Try and make plump the other!

"When Date's penance is done, "Dabitur helps his brother."

VII.

"Only, beware relapse!"
The Abbot hung his head.
This beggar might be, perhaps,
An angel, Luther said.

POPULARITY.

I.

STAND still, true poet that you are,
I know you; let me try and draw you.
Some night you'll fail us. When afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star.

11.

My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend
That loving hand of His which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless He needs you—
Just saves your light to spend?

111.

His clenched Hand shall unclose at last I know, and let out all the beauty. My poet holds the future fast, Accepts the coming ages' duty, Their present for this past.

IV.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow Shall clear, to God the chalice raising; "Others give best at first, but Thou For ever set'st our table praising,— Keep'st the good wine till now."

v.

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder.
I'll say—a fisher (on the sand
By Tyre the Old) his ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

VII

And each bystander of them all Could criticise, and quote tradition How depths of blue sublimed some pall, To get which, pricked a king's ambition; Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

VIII.

Yet there's the dye,—in that rough mesh,
The sea has only just o'er-whispered!
Live whelks, the lip's-beard dripping fresh,
As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX.

Enough to turnish Solomon
Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That when gold-robed he took the throne
In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

X,

Most like the centre-spike of gold
Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,
What time, with ardours manifold,
The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

XI.

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
Till art comes,—comes to pound and squeeze
And clarify,—refines to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

XII.

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,
And priced, and saleable at last!
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line,

AIII.

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats.
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup.
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY.

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE.

(In the original) rosa mundi; seu, fulcite me floribus. A conceit of master gysbrecht, canon-regular of saint jodocus-by-the-bar, ypres city. Cantuque, Virgilius. And hath often been sung at hock-tide and festivals. Gavisus eram, Jessides.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A.D. 1314; as distorted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries.—R. B.)

I.

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

The Lord, we look to once for all,

Is the Lord we should look at, all at once:
He knows not to vary, saith St. Paul,

Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce
See Him no other than as he is;
Give both the Infinites their due—
Infinite mercy, but, I wis,

As infinite a justice too.

Organ: plagal-cadence.

As infinite a justice too.

II.

ONE SINGETH.

John, Master of the Temple of God, Falling to sin the Unknown Sin, What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod, He sold it to Sultan SaladinTill, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there, Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive, And clipt of his wings in Paris square, They bring him now to be burned alive.

[And wanteth there grace of lute or clavicithern, ye shall say to confirm him who singeth—

We bring John now to be burned alive.

III.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built;

'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck;
But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,

Make a trench all round with the city muck;
Inside they pile log upon log, good store;
Faggots not few, blocks great and small,
Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more,—
For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

CHORUS.

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

IV.

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith;
Billets that blaze substantial and slow;
Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;
Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow:
Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
Sling him fast like a hog to seorch,
Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
Sing "Laudes" and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS.

Laus Deo--who bids clap-to the torch.

٧.

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,
Is burning alive in Paris square!
How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged?
Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there?
Or heave his chest, while a band goes round?
Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced?
Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound?
—Thinks John—I will call upon Jesus Christ.

[Here one crosseth himself.

٧ī.

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,
Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk;
To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.
(Salva reverentia.)
Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,
I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast me.
See thy servant, the plight wherein I am!
Art thou a Saviour? Save thou me!"

CHORUS.

'Tis John the mocker cries, Save thou me!

VII.

Who maketh God's menace an idle word?
—Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,
Than a damsel's threat to her wanton bird?—
For she too prattles of ugly names.
—Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what he knows
That God is good and the rest is breath;
Why else is the same styled, Sharon's rose?
Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS.

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith!

VIII.

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!
Some, honied of taste like your leman's tongue.
Some, bitter—for why? (roast garly on!)
Their tree struck root in devil's dung!
When Paul once reasoned of righteousness
And of temperance and of judgment to come,
Good Felix trembled, he could no less—
John, snickering, crook'd his wicked thumb?

CHORUS.

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb?

IX.

Ha ha, John plucks now at his rose
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!
Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays unclose;
Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;

And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;
And a gust of sulphur is all its smell
And lo, he is horribly in the toils
Of a coal-black giant flower of Hell!

CHORUS.

What maketh Heaven, that maketh Hell.

х.

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,
On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life—
To the Person, he bought and sold again—
For the Face, with his daily buffets rife—
Feature by feature It took its place!
And his voice like a mad dog's choking bark
At the steady Whole of the Judge's Face—
Died. Forth John's soul flared into the oark

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

God help all poor souls lost in the dark!

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

I.

I wonder do you feel to-day
As I have felt, since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

11.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalised me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

"III.

Help me to hold it: first it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

ıv.

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal,—and last
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

v.

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI.

Such life there, through such lengths of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting Nature have her way
While Heaven looks from its towers.

VII.

How say you? Let us, O my dove, Let us be unashamed of soul, As earth lies bare to heaven above. How is it under our control To love or not to love?

VIII.

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more—
Nor yours, nor mine,—nor slave nor free!
Where does the fault lie? what the core
Of the wound, since wound must be?

ıx.

I would I could adopt your will, See with your eyes, and set my heart Beating by yours, and drink my fill At your soul's springs,—your part, my part In life, for good and ill.

x.

No. I yearn upward—touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

XI.

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

XII.

Just when I seemed about to learn!
Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern—
Infinite passion and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL.

[Time-Shortly after the revival of learning in Europe.]

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
Singing together.

Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,
Each in its tether

Sleeping safe on the bosch of the plain,

Cared-for till cock-crow.

Look out if yonder's not the day again

Rimming the rock-row!

That's the appropriate country—there, man's thought, Rarer, intenser,

Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,

Chafes in the censer!

Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crob; Seek we sepulture

On a tall mountain, citied to the top,

Crowded with culture!

All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels; Clouds overcome it;

No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's Circling its summit!

Thither our path lies-wind we up the heights-Wait ye the warning?

Our low life was the level's and the night's;

He's for the morning!

Step to a tune, square chests, erect the head, 'Ware the beholders!

This is our master, famous, calm, and dead, Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft, Safe from the weather!

He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft, Singing together,

He was a man born with thy face and throat. Lyric Apollo!

Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note Winter would follow?

Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone! Cramped and diminished,

Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon! My dance is finished!"

No, that's the world's way! (keep the mountain-side, Make for the city.)

He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride Over men's pity;

Left play for work, and grappled with the world Bent on escaping:

"What's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled? Show me their shaping,

Theirs, who most studied man, the bard and sage, Give! "-So he gowned him,

Straight got by heart that book to its last page: Learned, we found him!

Yea, but we found him bald too—eyes like lead, Accents uncertain:

"Time to taste life," another would have said,
"Up with the curtain!"

This man said rather, "Actual life comes next?

Patience a moment!

Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text, Still, there's the comment.

Let me know all. Prate not of most or least, Painful or easy:

Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast, Ay, nor feel queasy!"

Oh, such a life as he resolved to live, When he had learned it,

When he had gathered all books had to give; Sooner, he spurned it!

Image the whole, then execute the parts— Fancy the fabric

Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz, Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here's the town-gate reached: there's the market-place Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace (Hearten our chorus)

Still before living he'd learn how to live--No end to learning.

Earn the means first—God surely will contrive Use for our earning.

Others mistrust and say--"But time escapes,-

He said, "What's Time? leave Now for dogs and apes!

Man has For ever."

Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head; Calculus racked him:

Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead; Tussis attacked him.

"Now, Master, take a little rest!"—not he! (Caution redoubled!

Step two a-breast, the way winds narrowly.)
Not a whit troubled,

Back to his studies, fresher than at first, Fierce as a dragon

He, (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature, Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure, Bad is our bargain! Was it not great? did not he throw on God, (He loves the burthen)—

God's task to make the heavenly period Perfect the earthen?

Did not he magnify the mind, show clear Just what it all meant?

He would not discount life, as fools do here, Paid by instalment!

He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success Found, or earth's failure:

"Wilt thou trust death or not?" he answered "Yes.
"Hence with life's pale lure!"

That low man seeks a little thing to do,

Sees it and does it:

This high man, with a great thing to pursue Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,

His hundred's soon hit:

This high man, aiming at a million, Misses an unit.

That, has the world here—should he need the next, Let the world mind him!

This, throws himself on God, and unperplext Seeking shall find Him.

So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife, Ground he at grammar;

Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife.
While he could stammer

He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be !— Properly based *Oun*—

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic De, Dead from the waist down.

Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place.

Hail to your purlieus
All ye highfliers of the feathered race,

Swallows and curlews! Here's the top-peak! the multitude below

Live, for they can there.

This man decided not to Live but Know—

Bury this man there?

Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form, Lightnings are loosened,

Stars come and go! let joy break with the storm— Peace let the dew send!

Lofty designs must close in like effects: Loftily lying,

Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects Living and dying.

ONE WAY OF LOVE.

I.

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves. Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves, And strew them where Pauline may pass. She will not turn aside? Alas! Let them lie. Suppose they die? The chance was they might take her eye.

II.

How many a month I strove to suit These stubborn fingers to the lute! To-day I venture all I know. She will not hear my music? So! Break the string—fold music's wing. Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

III.

My whole life long I learned to love. This hour my utmost art I prove And speak my passion.—Heaven or hell? She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well! Lose who may—I still can say, Those who win heaven, blest are they.

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE.

٤.

June was not over,
Though past the full.
And the best of her roses
Had yet to blow,
When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
Since ears are dull,
And time discloses)

Turned him and said with a man's true air, Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 'twere,—"If I tire of your June, will she greatly care?"

H.

Well, Dear, in-doors with you!
True, serene deadness
Tries a man's temper.
What's in the blossom
June wears on her bosom?
Can it clear scores with you?
Sweetness and redness,
Eadem semper!

Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!

If June mends her bowers now, your hand left unsightly
By plucking their roses,—my June will do rightly.

III.

And after, for pastime,
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
All petais, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time,—
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness:
experience of man and of spider

Or if, with experience of man and of spider, She use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder, To stop the fresh spinning,—why, June will consider.

"TRANSCENDENTALISM:"

A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS.

Stor playing, poet! may a brother speak?

'Tis you speak, that's your error. Song's our art:
Whereas you please to speak these naked thoughts
Instead of draping them in sights and sounds.

—True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to treasure up!
But why such long prolusion and display,
Such turning and adjustment of the harp,
And taking it upon your breast at length,
Only to speak dry words across its strings?
Stark-naked thought is in request enough—
Speak prose and holloa it till Europe hears!
The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,
Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp to Alp—
Exchange our harp for that,—who hinders you?

But here's your fault; grown men want thought, you think Thought's what they mean by verse, and seek in verse: Boys seek for images and melody, Men must have reason-so you aim at men. Quite otherwise! Objects throng our youth, 'tis true We see and hear and do not wonder much. If you could tell us what they mean, indeed! As Swedish Bæhme never cared for plants Until it happed, a-walking in the fields, He noticed all at once that plants could speak, Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him. That day the daisy had an eye indeed— Colloquised with the cowslip on such themes! We find them extant yet in Jacob's prose. But by the time youth slips a stage or two While reading prose in that tough book he wrote, (Collating, and emendating the same And settling on the sense most to our mind) We shut the clasps and find life's summer past. Then, who helps more, pray, to repair our loss— Another Bæhme with a tougher book And subtler meanings of what roses say,--

Or some stout Mage like him of Halberstadt,
John, who made things Behme wrote thoughts about?
He with a "look you!" vents a brace of rhymes,
And in there breaks the sudden rose herself,
Over us, under, round us every side,
Nay, in and out the tables and the chairs
And musty volumes, Behme's book and all,—
Buries us with a glory, young once more,
Pouring heaven into this shut house of life.

So come, the harp back to your heart again! You are a poem, though your poem's naught. The best of all you did before, believe, Was your own boy's-face o'er the finer chords Bent, following the cherub at the top That points to God with his paired half-moon wings.

MISCONCEPTIONS.

I.

This is a spray the Bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
Fit for her nest and her treasure.
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

II.

This is a heart the Queen leant on,
Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true boso: a she bent on,
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on—
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

ONE WORD MORE.

TO E. B. B.

ı.

THERE they are, my fifty men and women Naming me the fifty poems finished! Take them, Love, the book and me together. Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

II.

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
Made and wrote them in a certain volume
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil,
Else he only used to draw Madonnas:
These, the world might view—but One, the volume.
Who that one, you ask? Your heart instructs you.
Did she live and love it all her life-time?
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving—
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's?

III.

You and I would rather read that volume, (Taken to his beating bosom by it)
Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas—
Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre—
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

IV.

You and I will never read that volume. Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it. Guido Reni dying, all Bologna Cried, and the world with it, "Ours—the treasure! Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

v.

Dante once prepared to paint an angel: Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice." While he mused and traced it and retraced it. (Peradventure with a pen corroded Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for, When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked, Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma. Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment, Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle, Let the wretch go festering thro' Florence)— Dante, who loved well because he hated, Hated wickedness that hinders loving, Dante standing, studying his angel,— In there broke the folk of his Inferno. Says he—" Certain people of importance" Such he gave his daily, dreadful line to) Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet. Says the poet—"Then I stopped my painting."

VI.

You and I would rather see that angel, Painted by the tenderness of Dante, Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno.

VII.

You and I will never see that picture. While he mused on love and Beatrice, While he softened o'er his outlined angel, In they broke, those "people of importance:" We and Bice bear the loss forever.

VIII.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Darte's picture?

JX.

This: no artist lives and loves that longs not Once? and only once, and for One only,

'Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language

Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—

Using nature that's an art to others,

Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.

Ay, of all the artists living, loving.

None but would forego his proper dowry,—

Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,—

Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,

Put to proof art alien to the artist's,

Once, and only once, and for One only,

So to be the man and leave the artist,

Save the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

х.

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement! He who smites the rock and spreads the water, Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him, Even he, the minute makes immortal, Proves, perchance, his mortal in the minute, Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing. While he smites, how can he but remember, So he smote before, in such a peril, When they stood and mocked—"Shall smiting help us? When they drank and sneered—"A stroke is easy!" When they wiped their mouths and went their journey, Throwing him for thanks—"But drought was pleasant." Thus old memories mar the actual triumph; Thus the doing savours of disrelish; Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat; O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate, Carelessness or consciousness, the gesture. For he bears an ancient wrong about him, Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces, Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude— "How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us?" Guesses what is like to prove the sequel— "Egypt's flesh-pots-nay, the drought was better."

χī.

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant! Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance, Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's impérial fiat. Never dares the man put off the prophet.

XII.

Did he love one face from out the thousands, (Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely, Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,) He would envy yon dumb patient camel, Keeping a reserve of scanty water Meant to save his own life in the desert; Ready in the desert to deliver (Kneeling down to let his breast be opened) Hoard and life together for his mistress.

XIII.

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues
Make you music that should all-express me;
So it seems: I stand on my attainment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
Other heights in other lives, God willing—
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love:

XIV.

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seized it. Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly, Lines I write the first time and the last time. He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush, Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly, Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little, Makes a strange art of an art familiar, Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets. He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess. He who writes. may write for once, as I do.

xv.

Love, you saw me gather men and women, Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy, Enter each and all, and use their service, Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem. Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows, Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving: I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's, Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty. Let me speak this once in my true person, Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea, Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence—Pray you, look on these my men and women, Take and keep my fifty poems finished; Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also! Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

XVI.

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self! Here in London, yonder late in Florence, Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured. Curving on a sky imbrued with colour, Drifted over Fiesole by twilight, Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth. Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato, Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder, Perfect till the nightingales applauded. Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished, Hard to greet, she traverses the house-roofs, Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver, Goes dispiritedly,—glad to finish.

XVII.

What, there's nothing in the moon note-worthy? Nay—for if that moon could love a mortal, Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy) All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos) She would turn a new side to her mortal, Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace, Blind to Galileo on his turret, Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even! Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—When she turns round, comes again in heaven, Opens out anew for worse or better?

Proves she like some portent of an ice-berg Swimming full upon the ship it founders, Hungry with huge teetn of splintered chrystals? Proves she as the paved-work of a sapplifire Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain? Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest, Stand upon the paved-work of a sapphire. Like the bodied heaven in his clearness Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved-work, When they are and drank and saw God also!

XVIII.

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know. Only this is sure—the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her.

XIX.

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
This to you—yourself my moon of poets!
Ah, but that's the world's side—there's the wonder—Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you.
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you,
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

XX.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas, Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno, Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it, Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom!